

LIBERAL OPINIONS,

OR THE

HISTORY of BENIGNUS.

V O L. V.

LIBRARY OF THE

OF THE



HISTORICAL

OF THE

LIBERAL OPINIONS,

Or the HISTORY of

B E N I G N U S,

By COURTNEY MELMOTH.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

Second Edition, revised, corrected, and enlarged.



The Abode of Benignus discover'd.

VOL. V.

L O N D O N,

Printed for G. ROBINSON, and J. BEW, in Paternoster-
Row; and Sold by J. WALTER, Charing-Cross.

MDCCLXXVII.



LIBERAL OPINIONS,

In which is continued the

H I S T O R Y

O F

B E N I G N U S.

I have, in this rough work, shaped out a man,
Whom this beneath world, doth embrace and hug
With amplest entertainment. My free drift
Halts not particularly : but moves itself,
And darts, an eagle-flight, bold and forth on.

SHAKESPEARE.

WRITTEN by HIMSELF.

And published by

COURTNEY MELMOTH.

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T O
H E R G R A C E
T H E
D U C H E S S O F D E V O N S H I R E .

M A D A M ,

THE vanity, of so young a writer, being abundantly gratified, by the flattering notice which hath been taken of the former parts of this work, I boast not the honour of their being countenanced by patrons of the most distinguishing taste and discernment. At the same time it is to the account of a more elevated pride I place the happiness, of being permitted to shelter the present volumes, under the auspices of so amiable

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and powerful a protector as the DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE ; whose affability of temper, vivacity of disposition, and generosity of spirit, give to dignity of rank that brilliancy of personal character, which reflects the highest lustre on exalted station.

I am, 14 NO 63

Madam,

Your Grace's most obliged,

and most obedient

humble servant,

COURTNEY MELMOTH.

P R E F A C E.

THE History of Benignus is, in these volumes, brought to such a period as sufficiently enforces the *moral* intended to be deduced from it. The laws of romance, novel, and comedy, might require a different catastrophe: for in those, it is too often the custom, (at *all events*, even though many are brought in, as it were, by *the head and shoulders*) to crowd the *last* scene with persons married, or murdered, to the novel-reader's satisfaction. But the laws of *narratives*

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rative ought to be less rigid, and, I flatter myself, the reader will forgive my adhering, upon this occasion, to *human nature*, even though I verge against the formalities of literary custom.—

The former portions of the work contain many of those dialogues, conversation-pieces, and characters, which fell, necessarily, in the way of our emigrating author in his romantic ramble after *happiness*.

But now, as he advances farther into society, a greater variety of *events* and *opinions*, (some serious, some whimsical, according to the particular temper, mind, and manner of the speaker) present themselves: to which have been generally added, the adventurer's reflections, upon peculiar scenes, as they figured before him.

In the progress of these delineations, the great DESIGN of the Work, hath never been lost sight of : on the contrary, every volume, as it may be noted by the discerning reader, carries the intended illustration nearer to the heart and understanding ; till the result of the *whole*, it is hoped, appears to be in full lustre, *what* the author himself, feelingly asserts, it *should* be.

“ Unhappy (says our disappointed adventurer, in the 110th chapter of the volumes now offered) is he, who, in the days of his youth, traverses this intricate world, without a guide ; and of all other preposterous passions, the most preposterous is *that*, which induces an orphan of fortune to trust himself to mankind, with neither experience to direct, prudence to advise, nor œconomy

to regulate. Let no man who is new to the active scenes of a city, ever venture again into a metropolis, unattended : let no man indulge his inclinations for *travelling*, without first considering that if he is miserable at home, he must tread warily indeed, if he does not *increase* that misery abroad. Let no man rush into the tumults of life without a virtuous monitor : in a word, let every *Telemachus* tremble at the conduct, which is not first sanctified by the approbation of a *Mentor* !”

This apostrophe hath been *variously* exemplified in the course of the History ; in which, it appears to have been, not the *least* effort of the author, to analyze the real characters of men, to display the strange and ridiculous inconsistencies of human opinion

nion respecting HAPPINESS ; and, (after all this shew off of folly, delusion, and absurdity, under their characteristic disguises) to fix, by predominant arguments, the *highest* degree of that happiness, in the practice of Virtue, and in the precepts of Christianity.

Both the editor and the author have, already, entered a caveat against being accountable for the vice or depravity of any of the *characters*. Who ever thought of charging Shakespeare with immorality, for having drawn an Jago ; Fielding, a Blifil ; or Richardson, a Lovelace ?

It is certain that, in these closing volumes, some reprehensible characters, will offer themselves ; and, perhaps, some scenes that certain editors might have rejected. But, I am persuaded, those writers, who only employ

P R E F A C E.

ploy themselves in drawing pictures of Virtue, do her but *half* justice. The real gem is set off by the foil ; the charms of beauty are heighened by deformity : in like manner the lustre of *virtue* derives greater brilliancy from being opposed to the squallid appearances of *vice*. If the maxim of the poet be indeed true : if,

“ Vice is a monster of so frightful mein
As, to be hated, needs but to be *seen* : ”

it follows, that to *pourtray* that monster, and to place the portrait, (by way of *contrast*) near the picture of Virtue, is the most commendable task in which a moral painter, either serious or comic, can engage.

Aye, (it may be said) but if this monster is
[so disguised by false colouring, and so tricked
out

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out by the hand of the painter, as to attract us under the form of a cherub, and is thereby able to “make the worse, appear the better reason,” may not the danger be excessive? To this I answer, that in the world,—in *real* life—infinite are the dangers produced by this polished, and Belial-like hypocrisy: but, it has been the constant care of this History, to make every contrast *conspicuous*: thus the irregular bounty of BENIGNUS is opposed to the rational sympathy of *Greaves*: the coarseness of the *Grocer*, is held in contrast to the delicacy of *Blewett*: the openness of *Benjamin*, to the artifice of his uncle: the polish of *Draper*, to the queerness of *Green*: the purity of conjugal love, in *Sudberry*, to the illicit engagements of *Benignus*, with *Lucy* and *Blake’s* wife; the system of
the

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the Freethinker, with the system of the Lady who speaks in the FRAGMENT that will be found in the present volumes.

Thus, even the *careless* reader, may detect the cloven foot, as he goes along; and distinguish the painted devil, which, (arrayed only in the ornaments of native innocence) in despite of those plausible affectations that are assumed to make him prosper in society, come to merited shame at last.

Here then the editor thinks it necessary to terminate the History, and to take leave both of his author and the public.

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LIBERAL OPINIONS, &c.

T H E HISTORY of BENIGNUS.

C H A P. XCV.

AS I was impressing my seal upon the wax of Mr. Blewitt's letter, a servant informed me that the taylor was waiting for me below; who, upon being ushered into the study, said he attended my pleasure, by request of Mr. Ben. Abrahams, and should think

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B

him-

himself honoured by my commands. Yes, sir, said I, you will make me up a suit of genteel half-mourning, and as expeditiously as possible.

Upon this, he took out his instruments of mensuration, and began to make some small objections to certain particulars in the workmanship and taste of my present habiliments; observing, with an acute eye of criticism, while he was notching and nipping the parchment, that, he saw the fellow who cut out my cloaths, *would* have disfigured me, if he could: So cobbled a job, sir, cries he, I never yet saw. What do you chiefly dislike in the thing, replied I? Oh, sir, answers the taylor, it is very impertinent in me to dislike any thing a gentleman pleases to wear; and moreover, it
looks

looks like *disparaging* another man's labour : but as to these cloaths, fir, the Skip, begging your pardon, ought to be run through the eyes with his own needle : tho' indeed one would think he had lost his eye-sight long ago, for look, fir, the sleeves are too little, the skirts too short, the flaps too long, the chest too narrow, and the collar too broad : then, fir, what a *skimping* waistcoat is here ! neither cut, nor turn, nor slope, nor figure : Oh the wretch ! And as to the breeches, why they are mere *hopsacks*. I do not mean to prejudice you, fir, against the man, because, no doubt, he has done his best ; I shall only observe, that *I* will do mine.

Here he dropt upon one knee, and took the dimensions of my waist

and knees. It seems too, that the *former* work, was not only badly cut out, but worse put together ; for this connoisseur presently found out, that the buttons were not equidistant, the seams were inelegantly finished, the plaits were uneven, and the button-holes were *boggled*.

Now from these analytical premises I drew two positive inferences ; first, that I had hitherto employed the worst, and wickedest taylor that ever threaded a needle ; and that I was now going to employ one of the most honest and ingenious of his trade. *This*, indeed, he soon thought proper to confirm with his own mouth, by assuring me, that I should *now* have a suit fit for a christian ; that it should grow to me as *natural* as if I was born with

with it; that he had the honour to work for some of the first people in the kingdom, and amongst others, for some of the *blood royal*.

At this awful intelligence he pursed up his mouth, stroaked his chin, and made a pause; appearing perfectly to understand the importance of taking leave at the critical time; to stay a moment beyond which, is often to *outstay* the moment of *eclat* and dignity. Having finished therefore his climax, closing it full upon the sacred persons, yea, upon the very backs of the Blood Royal, he made his bow and *exit* in the same judicious instant.

He had scarce shut the door, before I cast my eye upon the lacerated button-hole, which I fully intended he

should in some measure repair upon the spot; yet such a stickler was I, at that moment, for the preservation of dignity, that I determined to visit my friend, with a rent in my garment, rather than lower the man's consequence, by calling him back to the ignominy of threading a needle: and so off walked the taylor, without the least diminution of his character or consciousness.

By this time the well-bred bell of Mr. Draper began to tingle, and I took the liberty of a friend to run up to his chamber, and amuse him with the adventure. I wish, said he, Benignus, you could wave your appointment with that money-telling fellow, your agent, till to-morrow. Do, my dear Lad, send an apology to
Parsons,

Parsons, say you will meet *him* to-morrow, and dedicate the *present* time to mirth, and to me.

Such was the grace with which this young gentleman always spoke, when he wished to persuade, and *by* persuasion to gain his purpose; the smile upon his cheek looked such affability, and his air was so attracting, that, whether he invited to pleasure, or to business, he was sure to conquer. I agreed to attend him, and went down again into the library to scribble an apology to the agent; for which indiscretion I once more beg pardon of the mercantile reader, who, in spite of all I can say however, hath assuredly given me up, as a thoughtless young fellow, who would never come to any thing.

The trusty Benjamin now came loaded with my portmanteau, which he had laid over his own shoulder; so that I was enabled to dress myself with more neatness. Well, Benjamin, said I, how are the ladies, and your uncle? Ah sir, answered the good youth, they are but so, so,—Miss Alicia is very indifferent indeed: the house looks as if it wanted something: methoughts too my young Lady, has—but I ask pardon, sir: mayhap I shall say more than becomes me. Speak on, Benjamin, rejoined I, I am your friend—Sir, replies Ben, you are a *goodlike* young gentleman, as a woman shall see; and as miss is a little *melancholish*, I can't help thinking she pines a little bit after *you*, sir: nay, sir, don't be angry, but I I'm partly, almost

most sure of it, for——! For what Ben, said I, smiling? For did not you observe, sir, cries Ben, how her colour went and came the other day, when you and she were standing at the parlour-door, and how she blushed up, and was *flushed* because I happened to go by, and see you looking at one another—well, sir, pray don't be offended, but she's a sweet lady, and I am sure——

Hearing Mr. Draper come down stairs, I interrupted Benjamin, by jocosely thanking him for his intelligence, and telling him that, as I saw he was a keen observer, I must mind my looks for the future.

This compliment so perfectly delighted him (such is the omnipotence of flattery, from whose insinuating
 qualities

qualities even simplicity is not guarded) that, with an unaccustomed air of sufficiency he said, Yes, yes sir, I guessed in a moment, whereabouts the wind sat, and though I say it, who should *not* say it, I believe I can see as far into a mill-stone, as he that pecks it.

This observation lifted up the lad's head; and, like a man who had just discovered his sagacity, he strutted away with as assured a step, as if he had that moment dropt the commoner, and had a royal title, *in futuro*, to wear a star upon his coat, and a coronet upon his carriage.

C H A P. XCVI.

I had in my own mind given a week for the putting together my new cloaths, but how rejoiced and surpris'd was I to find a man with a bundle wrapt up in a green cloth at Mr. Draper's door, early enough in the same evening, for our meditated excursion: I ran up into my chamber followed by the man, who, as if by instinct, left his shoes (in which, by the bye, he went slipshod) at the bottom of the stairs: And will your honour be kind enough to try them on? demanded the fellow, betraying the broad brogue of his country.

My

My master will be *after* coming here *with* me in a moment. The Irishman spoke partly truth, for the botcher to the blood royal, just as I had stripped, came dropping his chin upon his breast, and sliding a respectful foot along the floor like a well-bred taylor, while the shopman (whose garters were gaping from the knees of his breeches) retreated as became him, step by step, in proportion to the advances of his governor.

Your most obedient, sir, said the taylor in chief, permit me to assist you; helping me at the same time to put on the coat, and saying I need not trouble myself about the breeches, as he was certain they *must* fit. Nay, continued he—I was sure I could do it, if any man in England could. I was positive
certain

certain of it: you have such a shape, fir, that a man hath credit in working for you. Here, Skip, looke here's a fall in the shoulders! Arrah master, answered Skipp, the *gontlemin* is a neat made *craetur* fure enough. But, here then, Skip, if you talk of make, here's a back—fir, you are a pattern to cut out by. Now I think *on't*, I wish you would be so kind to slip on the breeches.

I complied with his request, after which he exclaimed in a transport—There then, Skip!—there's a thigh set off! there's wax for you!—why, fir begging your pardon, you were really disguised before, you were indeed—for I do declare, you are a man of a million: had you indeed, been as crooked as a bottle-screw, I could
have

have brought you into shape, but you don't want any lifts from me. No, that's a sure thing, said Skip. The master then, turned me round, smoothed my arms, and fastened the first button of my coat.

Are they not a little tightish or so, said I, fir, over the breast here? Not at all, fir—easy as a glove after an hour's wearing. Please to play your arms fir, and see that you have room enough—don't be afraid fir—it passed through many good hands, before it came to Skip, who is only the finisher. —I'll warrant the work. Upon this, I extended my right arm pretty forcibly, and lo! the stitches flew from the elbow to the shoulder. I was preparing an observation, when turning about, I saw the undertaker, tugging
vigor-

vigorously at the ears of the finisher, who began to howl most characteristically. Sirrah, if you was not in a gentleman's house, I would murder you for this, said the taylor; and then, coming to me—Sir, I ask your pardon, I am grieved at the disappointment, but it is not my fault, I only cut out the work—here he wiped the sweat from his face, with his finger, and then, snapping that finger against its next neighbour cried, Sir, I'll run the stitches over again *myself*. He then squatted cross-legged on the floor, saying, he was not, he thanked God, above his business, like some he could mention; and being supplied by Skip with thimble, thread, needle, and scissars, he soon repaired the damages. There, sir, says he

he—but I am almost ashamed to see you—I have not had such a thing happen these seven years—Oh Skip how could you be so damned, confounded careless!—saying this, he went away puffing, and fretting, with Skipp at his heels—absolutely refusing payment till the sum was *worth asking for*; an expression, which at that time, appeared somewhat strange, but of which, I have since, had many woful explanations. Indeed the principles upon which the London tradesmen act, are pretty uniform: they give credit in proportion to the appearance of the customer; splendour attracts their obsequiousness, and shabbiness their contempt: yet, is it not so much from pride, as sheer interest? Shabbiness does not even carry prospect
of

of payment along with it; while splendor has at least the *air* of a fortune, and *seems* able to discharge even the running account of a *taylor*.

Alas poor Sudberry! while the smile of good fortune shone upon *thee*, whom so respected, whom so entrusted, by the venal Skane? But when, in the tenderness of her heart, thy faithful partner deposited in the wretch's hands that precious likeness of all she loved, how (from that single circumstance of thy necessity) how altered was the scene? The long series of honourable exactness—the delicate intercourse—which for many a fair year thou hadst maintained, was in a moment forgotten! how differently did the hardened *creditor* view thy portrait, from thy lovely companion!

With a trembling hand *she* ventured it from her: she gave the copy, as ransom for the original; yet ere she hazarded it out of her sight, she often kissed—often bathed it with an affectionate tear,—and often pressed it to her bosom.—While the inhuman caitiff, on the other hand, regarded only the surrounding ornaments, tore the dear image from the wife's embraces, and used it as he would have used, for *gain*, the similitude of his Redeemer!

C H A P. XCVII.

There was a looking-glass on my dressing-table, that reflected my person in all the decorations of my new dress;

dress; and really the taylor had done me justice at last; for, whether I received any additions from a flourished button-hole, or from the fable chain that bound the edges, or whether grey was more becoming to me than a darker colour, I cannot determine, but I certainly looked much more like a man, whom *somebody knew*, and who *knew somebody*, than I did an hour before; and that I might be, all of a piece, I indulged the vanity of employing Mr. Draper's valet, to torture my locks (which were rude and redundant) into taste. I adjoined to these advantages, the charms of clean linen, with the benefits of soap and water, and made friends with the footman to make my shoes as black and glossy as my stockings. Thus

C 2

equipped,

equipped, I walked—if I remember right, rather with more uprightness than usual—into the parlour. Draper had that moment done dressing (his hair being finished before I had left the taylor to the blood-royal) and possibly, no man at five and twenty ever displayed a finer figure than he made at this instant: he was all elegance, ease, breeding and accomplishment, with less vanity, and with more excuses to be vain, than most young people of the age. Upon my word, Benignus, cried he, as soon as he saw me, you are dressed for execution; I was thinking of giving miss Dickens's poor old mother a call in the morning, and you shall accompany me, for I am determined that Spangle shall not possess so much

in-

innocence; and, by the by, I have already taken care of that, and have received from the old lady a cordial invitation to breakfast. I will attend you, said I, with joy, and am almost ready to kneel down to you, as the guardian angel of endangered virtue. Very well spoken indeed, replied Draper, tying up his garter, and a very pretty sentence. Ha! ha! Guardian Angel indeed! I save the girl because I would not have her fall into the hands of a coxcomb, who I believe cannot give her even *carnal* satisfaction, in exchange for her chastity,—yet, she will be ever sacred from any designs of mine: I care not how much beauty is thrown into my arms, by that mere jackal Tom Spangle; because, if I did not receive

it, the fellow would leave it, after the first night's lodging, to the bawd, or the stew; and a ruined woman, shall always find refuge either in my purse, or my bed-chamber, Benignus. But still, ardent as I am, I bring no woman from the shade of honour, to the streets of shame; whom I raise with one hand, I never destroy with the other; and may this sword, which I am now taking from this hook, send my soul to eternal anguish, if I would seduce the angelic wife of Sudberry, to be in full possession of the Grand Seigneur's seraglio. Not *seduce* her, I say Benignus; yet, if she (of her own free will) preferred me to Sudberry, I would rush to her bosom in all the luxury of throbbing expectation, let the consequence be what it might.

By

By the by, Benignus, you should *do* something for that family : against their visit we will think of a method : at present, we have an evening upon our hands, and I design to take care it shall not hang heavily upon them.

The chariot was now ordered to the door, and we were driven in it, agreeable to Mr. Draper's directions, to a beautiful villa about two miles and a half from the town, so that I apprehended he was going to pass the evening, with some agreeable family. — The house was pleasantly situated at a proper distance from the public road, amidst the umbrage of trees, the verdure of grass plats, and the variegation of flowers,—the air about this time grew extremely serene,

and the door was opened to us by a female servant.

There is a strange palpitation seizes the young heart (accompanied by a certain degree of awe) whenever the eye is struck with scenes, to which it is unfamiliarised. I trembled to the very foot, as I entered a house, of whose inhabitants I knew nothing; and the conversation of Mr. Draper, a short time before, did not serve to lessen my confusion. We were desired to repose a moment in a room—My mistress, gentlemen, said the maid simpering, is walking with *the ladies* in the garden. Very well, Lucy, cried Draper, we'll go to her there: come Sir James (speaking to *me* under that title) let us see if we can find them.

them. The servant now opened a glass door, and we passed into the garden.

It was the middle of May, and the weather, which upon my coming to town was remarkably cold, was now, as remarkably warm; but, at the time of our walking in the garden, the evening breezes, brought with them the blessing of coolness. The garden itself was delicious.

“ Of thickest covert was th’inwoven shade
 Laurel and myrtle, and what higher grew
 Of firm and fragrant leaf; on either side
 Acanthus, and each odorous bushy shrub,
 Fenc’d up the verdant wall; each beauteous flow’r
 Iris, all hues, roses, and jessamin,
 Rais’d high their florid heads between—
 Underfoot the violet,
 Crocus, and hyacinth with rich inlay,
 Broider’d the ground.”

After

After we had rambled for some time amidst "a wilderness of sweets," the sound of a female voice came softened through the shade, and on standing still to listen, the trills of the tune, were suited to alarm the pulses of youth: when the song was finished, we walked forward till we came within view of a bower, where several young ladies, with a matron in the midst, were drinking sherbet. My tremor increased as I came near them, and yet I by no means wished to retire. Draper addressed the matron with great familiarity, and, with as little ceremony, gave every one of her daughters (for such I thought them) a kiss; desiring me afterwards to follow his example: to which the young ladies seemed to express

express no aversion; and I undertook the point with less confusion than might be expected from my natural bashfulness. Elegance, variety, and fashion, appeared to superintend the features, forms, and dresses, of these young women; and I concluded the mother of such a lovely train, to be at once the richest, happiest, and cleverest of all parents.

C H A P. XCVIII.

We soon entered into sprightly conversation, for the ladies were by no means reserved; and methought they talked a little oddly before strangers, (for such *I* was certainly) about the delights of love, and the
volup-

voluptuousness of bathing at sun-set. Draper too, was a little more free than I ever saw him, even with the frolicksome Alicia: he said, to one of the ladies, that a bed of violets, was the bed of Paradise—to another, that Eve smelt upon lilies when she conceived; and to a third, that she was sport for Jove. Presently, we rose to ramble round the garden, (which, however, in one particular was by no means like that of Eden), and it was not long before the company scattered. I took advantage of this, and, entering a little thicket of nut-trees, began (as the reader knows it was usual with me) to whisper forth my meditations. And whether hath thy changeable stars thrown thee *now*, Benignus? Amidst regions of real spring,

spring, or visionary verdure? Amongst a circle of *living* beauties, made of mere flesh and blood, or imaginary goddesses? In one word: is it substance, or is it shadow? If shadow, may'st thou slumber under the sweet enchantment for ever! If substance, surely it is not more natural than it is *innocent*, to enjoy it!—What uncommon sensations seize me—I never felt such feverish, yet not undelightful attacks before—Heigho! how my heart springs: how my cheek burns—what the duce is the matter with me—? Heigho!—I walked out of the thicket, and met one of the ladies, gathering some flowers which bordered the side of it. I assisted her, and pilaged the whole bed, to make her nosegay. Don't trouble yourself,
Sir,

Sir, said she, displaying a dimple, and the most regular ranges of white teeth I ever saw. We walked together, and deviated from the paths into some shady mazes—there, as we were gliding along, something caught her by the shoe buckle, and in attempting briskly to recover herself—she fell down. Yet, where was all my good nature? Where even my courtesy to a woman? I surely lost it all, for though she came with some shew of violence (indeed she fell, upon a paigle bank) I never once endeavoured to take her up. Somehow or another her gown (which was of the purest white) and her under garments (which were white also) were so discomposed by the tumble, that certainly, if I had retained

obtained ever so small a share of friendliness for a fellow-creature in distress, I should have instantly knelt down to smooth them: however, to my shame be it spoken, I again confess—I did it not.

C H A P. XCIX.

When by her own efforts, she had got upon her legs, I ran to her, with uncommon ardour, and drew her close to my own bosom—the heart was forcibly struck, and passion came rushing upon me (arrayed in the most bewitching temptation) without giving me a moment's warning. She was formed for love, and I imprinted the kiss, till it echoed on her lip.

Ripe

Ripe as the rose in richness, in fragrance, and in colour, were the cheeks of this lady ; and, as I continued to press them to my own, her head sunk soft upon my shoulder, while her hand, dropt languishly down by her side, and rested upon—mine. Vitally inspired by this, the blush deepened, and the zephyr afforded a tender coolness, not inconsistent with the occasion. Again I seized her in my arms, and leading her once more to the edge of the thicket, I looked full into her eyes ; and then—O God of feeling, what magic is there in the eye of woman ! and then—both leaning down together—to crop *primroses*, we heard somebody call, and went *contentedly* into the house.

CH A P.

C H A P. C.

After we plucked *the primroses*—the lady told me that her name was Lucy, that she was her own mistress, that she was very apt to fall in *love*, and that indeed she lived at present in a very *loving* family; in a minute or two afterwards, she took a fancy to my new watch-chain, and upon drawing it from my pocket, and finding she made no objection to the watch itself, I gave her *both*. She then mentioned something about spring silks, and pointing to a lilac then in her hand, said, she should of all *things*, doat upon a sack exactly of that colour; and in conclusion gave

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me

me a gentle flap upon the cheek with a myrtle sprig, wishing at the same time, in plain English, that it was *bed-time*.

This last sentence it was, which induced me to examine her eyes. Very true indeed, sparkled they, my lady tells you the truth; if you can't read so plain a page, then art thou no scholar. Nay then, thought I, if that be the case, let us go and pluck some more primroses. When we had reached the house, I enquired for my companion, who it seems was set down to a game at whist with the ladies. Whist be whipped, said Lucy, honest *all-fours* for me. Saying this, she bade me again interpret her look; and her character was now fully explained.

The

The room into which she conducted me, seemed to have been furnished by Pleasure herself: the most voluptuous magnificence appeared on all hands, and every ornament was emblematic of the purpose for which it was admitted into the place. A large lustre was supported in the center by a naked figure, in the act of lighting the tapers, while the cieling represented the Graces binding the brows of a groupe of Bacchanals, with garlands of myrtle, intertwined with roses. On one side stood a crimson canopy, on drawing the curtains of which I discovered a sofa of the blackest sattin; at the top, Venus in a flowing robe of Tyrian purple was depicted in the attitude of presenting a veil, while Adonis, who stood

D 2 smiling

smiling behind her, seemed to watch an opportunity to steal it away.

The sun was just setting, and threw his farewell beam directly into the room ; so that, as the canopy promised to shade us, we were obliged, in common prudence, to place ourselves under it. About this time, her white hand reposed upon the couch, and she had taken off her glove !

In contrasted pleasures there is a delicacy not to be resisted. Now, when the sun's last rays are darted upon any thing crimson, every body knows the consequence—the cheeks on the other side are coloured with “so rosy a red,” that, to prevent hurting the eyes, it is necessary to—draw the curtains.

As

As soon as the sun was *gone down*, I rose, and felt the force of this truth a second time; that if *to be good is sometimes to be wretched, to be vicious is always to be so*, after the madness of the moment. And in this manner, was I, for the first time in my life, seduced into the company of a courtesan. I found Draper at the card-table; and pretending sudden illness, I earnestly requested to go home, with which Mr. Draper complied.

As soon as the chariot-door was shut, I caught Draper by the hand, and exclaimed, O friend, how could you deceive me? You led me into the fire, and I have burnt myself to death. Pshaw, said Draper, never be so cursedly squeamish, what has happened, is all for the best: you were a

mere *baby* before, and now I suppose you—have made a *man* of yourself.—Not contented with this, he rallied me most unmercifully. All would not do. I went melancholy into my chamber. I tossed about the bed. There was a stain in the ermine of my hitherto spotless conscience; reflections upon the *first* violations, while the soul is yet unhardened by habitual crimes, are sharp as the flaming sword of the arch-angel, and all the night I lamented that I had so little virtue, when vice was smiling before me. I attempted to sleep, but there was a thorn upon my pillow, and at the first peep of morning I got up—but I did not execrate the fair form that had betrayed me.

CHAP.

C H A P. CL.

How contradictory and inconsistent is man! how is he led captive, in the shackles of the passions, in defiance of his better reason?

It was impossible for any person upon earth to be more sincerely displeased with the transactions of the preceding day than myself. I tumbled over several volumes in Mr. Draper's library, but I met no sentiment that did not reproach me; and I was thoroughly angry, both with having yielded to the temptation, and with the cruel friend who had led me in the way of it. And yet I could not but reflect upon the fair seducer with

a degree of tenderness by no means merited on her side.

She was the very first of the sex that had successfully solicited my passions. It was *she* who called them out, it was *she* who gratified them. Ah, my good reader, let me beseech thee, to guard vigilantly against the *first* allurements of vice. If once thou permittest her to embrace thee, (and she will come to thee in the smile of joy, arrayed in the robe of voluptuousness) then beware; for, after the first trespass, (I again repeat it to thee) the way to the next is easy, and more difficult to be resisted; till, in the end, thine error shall slide into habit, and all that is infamous shall become familiar to thine eye, and even necessary

cessary to the ill-directed wishes of
thine heart.

These truths will indeed, be but
too forcibly elucidated in the fol-
lowing pages, and, though to my
own disgrace, I have set them down
with my pen exactly as they happened,
for thine instruction, consider the
transcript, I pray thee, as the hand-
writing on the wall, and let it be
to thee as the warning voice that
warneth thee from the paths of
destruction.

In the ardour of my revels with
this bewitching woman, I had, in the
most solemn manner promised, at her
request, to revisit her on the suc-
ceeding evening, and I was to bring
with me, according to her injunction,
some tokens of my regard to her.

How-

However, not to insult the reader with the repetition of scenes, that bring blushes in my face, even as I mark them upon paper, I shall in brief inform him, that the most dangerous of all passions, were now awakened: Draper, rather fanned than extinguished them—the path to personal excesses was now shewn me: I was in the hey-day of blood, and I *now* sought happiness, not in benevolence, but—in dissipation.

And at this period it was, that the nicer delicacies of my character, and all the delightful simplicities of the country cottager began to fly off, and to leave me. For more than three months, I was a dupe to this handsome courtesan. She sung, talked, looked, and embraced me into fascination.

Her

Her extravagance however was unbounded, and yet I was sufficiently enchanted to attempt its gratification; to attempt it at the risque of fortune, character, and every thing else. I was soon taught the mystery of *keeping*, and in the fondness of my foolish heart, I took lodgings for this Dulcinea, in the most expensive part of the town. Such, at last, became my infatuation, that I had a pride in seeing her eclipse women of real fashion in the elegance of her person, and in the richness of her dress; and I even deoted upon her enough to go with her openly into the places of public resort.

About this time however, I received a card from my agent, that a
little

little abated the violence of my career:
it was to the following purport.

To Benignus.

Sir,

I herewith answer, according to order, your draft for 250 pounds, and shall continue to observe your commands, while I have money in hand. At the same time, beg to remind you that this present draft, makes the sum of two thousand pounds had, per order, since the 13th instant; *exclusive* of the other sums since your arrival in London, for which I have your receipts, severally.

I am sir, with due respect,

Your most humble servant,

Archibald Parsons.

I now began to perceive that the consequence of *keeping*, was a pretty smart circumstance; and the plain fact was, that I had squandered away upon this artful woman, in a very few weeks a very tolerable fortune, without having done a single action that can be recorded to my advantage. So far otherwise, that I neglected my accustomed passion for adventure, I seldom visited my old friends in the square, forget both Benjamin and Abrahams, and was fairly making large strides from fashion and folly, to destruction.

C H A P. CII.

It so fell out that we were disappointed of the promised company of the Sudberrys on the day they had taught us to expect them; nor had either Draper or myself the happiness of seeing that amiable family for a considerable time afterwards. Poor Sudberry's distemper gained upon him too forcibly, either for the love of his wife, or the friendship of Mr. Draper to remove, and more than six months elapsed before he was able to leave his chamber: during which tedious interval, Mrs. Sudberry waited by his side, smoothed his pillow, and anticipated every wish that could possibly

possibly be performed by attention and tenderness. Nor would Draper, who insisted upon it, this was *his* family allow *me* to shew them a single civility beyond a message card, to enquire after the state of its health*.

Sorry am I to say, I was less *anxious* about these matters than formerly. It was the very period of enchantment; and I was pinned to the petticoat of a Dalilah, without a wish, either to recover my liberty, or to revive my curiosity. Plays, operas,

* Let it be sufficient to the kind reader, should he hear no more of this worthy family, to understand that, when Benignus *did* enjoy its company, he found it restored to its merited tranquillity; not only by the principal's recovering his health, in a greater degree, but also by an unexpected good stroke of fortune in its favour, which placed it in a state of quietude and competency.

mas-

masquerades, and tavern suppers now took possession of me; and Draper, who was always ready for either the vice or virtue of the moment, kept up the ball, led me by the heart through all the ceremonies of elevated prostitution, and equipped me at all points as a man of gallantry.

It was in one of these polite rambles that I became acquainted with a person through whose means I was again led into the world. As I was one evening treading the tedious round of Ranelagh, with my enchantress leaning upon my arm, when Draper, who generally attended me, was accosted by a gentleman who pressed him much to pass the night *rationally* at a tavern, whither some ten or a dozen honest fellows of the *set*, as he termed it, were

were to give him the meeting at eleven o'clock. Draper, who was always able to sway *me*, and, indeed, carry any thing he undertook, not only obtained my promise to accompany him, but also prevailed upon Lucy, (so was my favourite called) to trust me from her arms: for be it known, that she always affected to love me beyond measure, and would frequently pretend strokes of jealousy on purpose to bind me the faster. As soon then, as I had conveyed Lucy to her lodgings, we called an hackney coach and drove to the scene of appointment.

Now, my dear Benignus (said Draper, in our way thither) you are going to a set of characters utterly new to you. They are all of them men of spirit, and talents; but profess to de-

pise all forms and ceremonies, either in church or state, save such as directly favour their own notions, principles, and modes of thinking. I very seldom join them, though I am a member of their society: the reason is chiefly, because, as I told you before, I hate argument, and the conversation to which we are going, though supported with the utmost freedom on all sides, is *wholly* argumentative. It is called the Society of Systems, where every man vigorously supports his own opinion against every other, and offers either debates to defend, or reasons to recommend it.

Notwithstanding my attachments to my mistress, the prospect of my approaching entertainment had sufficient attraction to awaken my curiosity,

city, and as the coach stopped at the door of the tavern, I felt my heart pant eagerly with expectation.

C H A P. III.

We were ushered into a very spacious room, wherein (for we were some minutes past our hour) were several gentlemen, to the number of about twelve, sitting in a semi-circle, and *one* mounted above the rest, by two or three steps, whom I discovered to be the person that had given us the invitation, and who was, indeed, the President of the Society.

As the debates were not yet begun, the President, whose name was Blake, descended from his seat, and (as the

friend of their brother member, Mr. Draper) introduced me to the company, who were pleased to receive me very graciously. After this he remounted, took his chair, gave the usual signal of preparation by tingling a bell, and the business of the night began.

Very fortunately for me, the questions then to be agitated, were the very ones I had so long been anxious to know the truth of; namely, whether Providence had acted partially, or otherwise, in regard to terrestrial dispensations, and *which* system, of all the infinite *variety* of systems, was really most conducive to human wisdom, dignity, and happiness?"

Now then, thought I, now shall I indeed be satisfied; now will the grand secret, that has so long puzzled me,

me,

me, be developed : I am amongst men of meditation, liberty, and experience ; and this is assuredly the very night that shall settle my opinions, and establish my hitherto fluctuating ideas, upon the solid basis of conviction : my *present* notion however is, that the felicity of life cannot be perfect without a *mistress*. Heigho !—I wish my Lucy could sit by my side, and enjoy with me this “ feast of reason, and this flow of soul.” Heigho—now for it : now for it.

Scarce had I indulged this soliloquy, before a pale, tall, skeleton figure rose up, and in a voice at once shrill, piercing, and complaining, thus addressed the President.

I shall shew you, Mr. President, what true happiness *is*, by telling you

what, of all other things, it is *not*. Is it a question, whether Providence has been partial or not? Look at me, I am an instance of the partiality of Providence. The only poor man of the society is now speaking; and I will take upon me to prove, that happiness is every where; but in the garret of an author. When nature makes a poet, gentlemen, she makes a creature as little able to stand alone, and baffle it thro' the dirty and difficult ways of this world, as if she had given him but one leg; and I will *prove* it. It may be said indeed, that an author hath the talents of genius, though he lie hath not the purse of fortune. He hath, you will say, the *poetic* power of building palaces, without either brick, cement, mathematics, or mortar; he
can

can describe with the same facility he adorns; the gardens bloom at his bidding, and the flowers shoot up into beauty, and scatter fragrance, as he *waves a feather*. What of that? can these be a sorrier privilege than *his*, who is able to spread a *visionary* banquet, order servants to attend in their best liveries, and assemble together the politest company, when *he* who feedeth the ravens knoweth, that, in point of substantial eating and drinking, this identical poet, could as soon command the portals of the treasury to turn upon their hinges, and open their coffers in obedience to his commands, as he could procure, either by cash or credit, the chicken that is roasting upon the luxurious spit of an illiterate alderman. What a multitude

are thrown monthly, weekly, hourly, daily into the world, without the inheritance of a single penny ; and yet with a set of sollicitous cravings, which demand gratification ? you must know Mr. President, that *I* am one of the many, who have real and found reasons for thinking there are very unpardonable inequalities in the division of human property. Even as I lay in the cradle I was deserted by fortune ; nature gave me a knack at book-making, and I have now for many years earned my bread by the fatigue of my fingers : not a dinner but what I extorted from the standish ; not a bed, but I literally *made* it, of geese feathers : in the day I worked with the quills upon the wing, that I might slumber at night upon the down
of

of the bosom ; and yet, after all, in the *first* years of my apprenticeship, I did little more than pluck the bird, for the table of my bookseller. He feasted upon the body, and I starved upon the feathers. Now will any man present pretend to say, there is not a most *monstrous* disproportion between the different fates of booksellers and their authors ? Surely, Mr. President, all the Deities, nether and upper, were asleep ; surely they had no eye to the operations of *matter* and *motion*, when these crooked deeds were doing ! I will maintain it, sir, that a poet, ought to be in every respect as happy, ought to have as good a share of this life's comforts as a bookseller—shall a being, who exists by the purchase of a commodity, of the true value of
which

which he is as ignorant as the animal-
cula at the verge of his nostrils; shall
a fellow, who lives by the sale of an-
other man's brains, fare better, look
fleecker, and sleep softer than the very
poets that furnish them with the com-
modity itself? I say, therefore, and I
will support it with my dying breath,
authors are not sufficiently considered
by Providence; and a poet is the only
creature of all creatures created, that is
absolutely neglected.—I say likewise
Mr. President—I say that—that—I
say—sir—

Here the stroke of a hammer from
the President, knocked down both
the author and his argument, in the
same instant: for by the laws of this
society, no man (unless his eloquence
was particularly attracting) was al-
lowed

lowed to speak upon any given subject, more than ten minutes; and, from his strange method of utterance, the poet had exhausted his stipend long before he had half run himself out.

The poet was no sooner seated, than another member was upon his legs, and waving a white handkerchief in his hand with an air of genteel importance, thus began to harangue.

The worthy and learned member who spoke last, Mr. President, hath displayed his ingenuity, at the expence of his veracity. It were easy to prove that the life of a poet is by no means so unhappy as he has coloured it; and that all his local distresses are richly compensated by adequate blessings, and by priviledges peculiar to the poetical

tical character. Hath not the poet all the advantages and all pleasures of literary reputation? Hath he not all the delights of fancy? Can he not paint—can he not describe—can he not *create*? Hath he not the huzza of printed popularity, always shouted before him? Do not all the honours belong to him, *jure divino*, that result from the laurel, the whisper, and the busy buzz of celebrity? Doth not the pointed finger pursue him, wherefoever he goes? Is not every lip upon the officious echo, telling us that *there he goes, that's he, that's* the famous Mr. Such-a-one? And do not these, together with a fame handed down by the historians from generation to generation, more than make amends for temporal inconveniences?

Mr.

Mr. President, it is not to be disputed; the life of a poet is not a bad life, nay fir, I will take upon me to prove that it is a life, to all intents and purposes, *enviable*, when compared with many others. What think you, fir, of the life of a *patron*? Is there any being amongst all orders created, placed in so horrid a situation as a *patron*? A patron, fir, I have the misfortune to *know*, is fixed by destiny as it were between two tremendous rocks: on *this* side of him glooms a Charybdis; on *that* a Scylla. If he *patronizes* he is for ever pestered with dunces; if he *refuses* to swallow the flummery of dedication, he is immediately purged with a dose of lampoon. Now I humbly submit it to your judgment, if it is not a most ungracious business
to

to be for ever upon the harrafs—to have one's doors beset and besieged by a parcel of harpies, armed against one's pocket not only with *talons*, but *talents*? Are we not obliged to keep an extra servant, on purpose to repeat the lye of the day to every man that hath the look of an author about him? Are we not for ever upon the fret by the ferment of printed contradictions? What temper can possibly bear the thousand attacks that are made upon our purses, by dunces in every form? This man presenting his poem; that his play; *this* plucking you by the sleeve with a description of your country house, which you see every day in the summer, as the Lord made it; *that* skulking in a corner, to seize you as you come from a morning's ride,
 with

with a rascally list of subscriptions. Is it not pitiable that a man of property, merely because he *hath* property, should be eternally invaded by the tribe of scribblers—and that he should be pelted through all the twelve months in the year, both by pro and con, by question and response, and stand the shot of simpletons and system-mongers, without any thing either for the loss of money or labour, except *waste* paper. Upon these accounts therefore, Mr. President, and many others to which patronage is heir to, I do not scruple to pronounce *happiness* more out of the reach of a patron than any other character upon the face of the earth: for which reason I conceive that *I* (who have at this moment lying on my window-seats
upwards

upwards of forty epistles dedicatory, the offerings only of the last winter) am one of the most miserable men of fortune that ever existed.

C H A P. CIV.

A third member began, as soon as the second had finished.

I have just heard, Mr. President, some very able arguments in regard to the misery of poets and patrons; and indeed, for my own part, I am of opinion, that a patron *is* amongst the most wretched of all God's works: perhaps he has no *equal*, if we except the fate of the man who really has a *passion for reading*, and an ability as well as an ambition to purchase libraries.

To

To my distress be it spoken, I ever had a curiosity both to look at and into a great variety of volumes, and, for near thirty years of my life, scarce any thing, on any subject came out, that I had not patience enough to examine it.

The Alps and Pyrenees of literature sunk before me. Folios, quartos, octavos, duodecimos, and so on to single sermons; poems published by *desire of friends*; dedications, *by permission*, two-penny essays, penny sonnets, half-penny elegies, and farthing epigrams, all, all had their share, of my money and my attention. I was, indeed, what might very well be termed, a universal reader; and my experience now tells me, that there is no wretchedness like *his*, who putteth his trust

in systems. In the course of my readings, sir, I have found the twenty-four letters of the alphabet, twenty thousand times prostituted: they have been perverted to innumerable ill purposes, and amongst others, to draw the deep veil of midnight over the fair form of Truth: to create an artificial chaos, where Nature, and the God of it said, *Let there be light*: to re-produce anarchy in the age, that ought to be the age of order: to puzzle the palpable, and make the opaque still more obscure; and all this, under the pretext of opening our eyes, and setting us right. If the patron complains of poets, I loudly execrate system-mongers, sir. Fie upon them! they have bent ten times treble that understanding which was naturally

naturally straight. While I continued in the swathing cloaths I was in a state of nature, incorrupted. My eyes *really* saw, my hands really felt ; and had I been permitted to go on, I should have been intimate with substance, and rejected shadow : truth would have been my guide, nature my companion, and common sense my friend. Instead of that, I lost my happiness with my petticoats, and the very day I distinguished my sex to the public, by assuming the breeches, was the first time I recollect to have seen the form of falsehood. The moment, Mr. President, that I began to see, feel, touch, taste, and smell objects as they actually *were*, I was taught to consider them, as they actually were *not* : but, according to the lights

wherein men (or rather children *like* men) insisted upon it they *should* be. The first nonsense that misled me, was the nurse's; and from her, I was promoted to the deceits of a school-master. By the one I was made to do as I was *bid*, at the peril of being given to a bug-bear in a white sheet, who, it seems, always eat up naughty boys at a mouthful; or else, I was to be put into the burial-hole, or thrown to the beggar-man: the consequence of this was, that I began to tremble at every thing white after it was dark, I fancied a bug-bear in every thing I saw; I never beheld a new opened grave, that the flesh did not creep upon my bones; and a ragged coat, or a long beard, always set me on the tremble, least the *beggar-*
man

man should be come for me: whereas, fir, I am certain, had it not been for these pernicious documents, I should have considered a white sheet, as neither more nor less formidable than any other coloured object, and a tattered garment would rather have interested my sensibility than awakened my apprehension.

As to the school-master, I was compelled (by virtue of that magic sceptre, which whips in at the tail, the wisdom which is to accomplish the head) to adopt all the absurdities of a pedant: and this prepared me for the still greater absurdity of colleges.

Though I was by this time, well fitted for the system of universities, yet I longed exceedingly to carry a halbert: but my parents were too

much bigoted to the old method of doing as *others had done*, and so wisely resolved to thwart *natural inclinations*, in favour of *established customs*. Thus, after going through the proper course (as it is *improperly* called), they determined my genius to what—as they usually do—it had the greatest repugnance:—even to the CHURCH. To this end, I inserted my name in the college-books, and I studied with an intentness, that impaired the sight of my soul, even more than that of my body. Weak however as I was, my curiosity was vigorous as ever, till at length, accustomed to delusion, I forgot the horror with which I viewed her deformity in my childhood, fancied charms in her person, admired the force of her intellect, and
 adopted

adopted her as the friend and guardian of my studies. By this time, Mr. President, I had a passion for systems, and purchased, agreeable to her pointing out to me, a systematical collection of books, amongst which were all the pens, *pro* and *con.* of church-history, christianity, deism, and atheism. I was taught to believe, that a complete classical, critical pastor, should look with a nice eye, at the sound and the rotten, the credulous and the incredulous, the Calvinist and the Caviller—the Roman and the Protestant, the Methodist and the Moravian. A very grave person told me, that it behoved me to examine all creeds, all faiths, and all orders of created beings, whether Christian, Jew, Gentile, or Turk: that

it would be working in the way of my profession, if, not contented with those obvious truths that lay upon the surface of the scriptures, I would peep into the by-ways, allies, nooks, and corners of the multitudinous persuasions, tenets, and opinions of men, with a sort of virtuoso vigilance.

Undaunted by the appearance of so gigantic a labour, I began the great work, purblind as I was : but, not to trouble you, Mr. President, with the particulars of a long story, I shall acquaint you, that about the time I had spoiled my eyes, and distracted my head with an attention to thirty commentaries in *folio*, upon my Bible in two *pocket* volumes, my vigilance was rewarded by the presentation of an excellent living. I soon retired to an admir-

admirable parsonage, where I was told by my physicians a pleasant pad, the country air, regular duty, regular diet, the exercises of my office, and my tithe pigs would bring me about again.

The Sunday after my commencing pastor, I designed to introduce myself to my new parishioners, in a kind of dedicatory discourse; and, desiring to adapt a suitable text thereto, I fixt upon a verse, by no means inapposite, though somewhat peculiar. Its singularity engaged my curiosity, and my curiosity sent me into my library, to make an enquiry amongst the *annotators*. Thirteen to the dozen of these, did I examine upon the verse, the context, and the whole chapter; and I remember well, I entered the
library

library with the watch in my hand, about four o'clock on the Thursday eve: I read till bed-time that night: I rose with the sun the next day, and, with short intermissions, was upon the search even to his down-setting. It was the business of Saturday to account for so astonishing a variation in the sense of the same verse in every commentary. I compared one with another, and endeavoured to reconcile so many learned contradictions: but how was I alarmed, Mr. President, when in the pursuit of systematic and orthodox accuracy, I heard the summons of the sabbath duty steal upon me unprepared. Yes, sir, I swear by my cassock, the sermon-bell was upon the toll when I had not so much as penned a slip of paper upon
the

the subject I had so long contemplated. I hurried on my band and gown, caught at the first sermon that offered itself to my hand, and running to the desk without stopping to put on the surplice, began in a trembling voice, to read the service. But now, sir, mark the upshot of that utter confusion into which I was thrown by those most villainous commentators.

Besides that I had wholly lost the chain of the argument I meant to pursue, the sermon, which, in the precipitation of my soul, I had brought with me, was no other than *that* (of which the third was Latin) preached before my lord the bishop, and a learned body at my induction; and, to complete the matter, I had upon my head, instead of a canonical full-

full-bottom, the very cap of purple velvet, that I usually wore in the laborious hours of delving into the pith of systems.

And yet, Mr. President, notwithstanding the perplexity I was thrown into by the annotators, when I consulted them upon a passage of scripture, and ran my foolish nose against the stumbling-blocks of those dismally dark explicators——notwithstanding these misfortunes, sir, I am now—what you see me—of responsible corpulence, and of decent bodily dimensions; and had I not already too much trespassed on your indulgence, I would inform you, what *I feel* to be HAPPINESS, and what, being now in possession of, I would not part with, either for the visions of poetry, the pride of patronage,

tronage, or any thing else upon the globe. I have found out real felicity, Mr. President, and I will not suffer her to depart again from me.

The whole company were so entertained by this venerable speaker, (who appeared to be stepping into his seventieth year, and yet commanded attention, both by his manner and appearance) it was the unanimous desire of the society, that the President should dispense with ordinary ceremonies, and allow the gentleman to finish his story, in which he was to discover the road to *real* HAPPINESS.

C H A P. CV.

The torrid scorplings of midsummer (continued the gentleman) are wonderfully inauspicious to both man and beast in certain distempers which affect the cerebellum: under these, the dog froths at the mouth, the bull bellows to Boreas for air; and the violent writer, and violent reader, are both ready for the whip and straight waistcoat. But when the fierceness of the day is over, and the world is kept from fainting, at the same time that vegetation is recovered from her swoon, by the night breezes, it is as likely a time for an *interval*, as any in the whole year.

It

It was, as I remember, upon an evening of this kind (when I had passed the hours of noon in all the furor of systematic madness), that I was walking at the back of my parsonage, in the meadow; when my ear was attracted by the voice of a person giving thanks. "The God of grace reward your worthiness," said the voice. I looked over the hedge, and by the help of a glass, which the commentators obliged me to use, I cast my eye upon two figures very oppositely disposed. The one, a courteous hale looking man, was binding his handkerchief pretty hard round the knee of the other, which was neither more or less than a *horse*, that had, as I afterwards found, just before thrown his rider—the very man, who
 was

was now employed in so humane an office.

He no sooner perceived me, than he begged earnestly that I would step over the hedge, and hold the bridle. this I did at the cost of first tumbling into the ditch, which my dimness prevented me from seeing on the other side, and for which fall (as well as a thousand *other* blunders) I may thank systems, Mr. President.

The owner of the beast, now began to strip, and with the fore-flap of his coat, to rub the blood from the nostrils, and the dirt from the forehead of the creature; and lastly, in a voice (where tenderness softened rebuke) thus spoke to the brute.

And wert *thou* affrighted; didst *thou* start aside from thy path, for that
thou

thou sawest rags and wretchedness in the way of thy on-going? See what thou hast got by it. That fall, and these smarting testimonies of it, are so many judgments upon thy barbarity! So may every wretch fall; so may every wretch meet a fate like thine.—Oh thou unkindly beast—who turneth from that through pride, to which he ought through sensibility to approach. And yet thou wert not wont to be so cruel, and so hard-hearted, neither: from my first putting the bit into thy mouth, even unto this day, have I found no blame in thee, till this hour. On the contrary, whenever I have eased the traveller, or the beggar upon thy back, *thou*, as if sensible of the gentle task in which I had engaged thee,

would step, as if on a shoe of silk, and tread (even in the most uneven paths) as thou wert treading upon a carpet of velvet.

For this one time I will heal thy bruises, pity, and pardon thee—but—I charge thee to consider my clemency, and sin no more; for in the day that thou insultest misfortune a *second* time, thou shalt surely die.

It was not till this moment that I discovered a very poor creature of the female sex, sitting in a pensive posture, with a small scrip by her side, and a baby nestled in the softness of slumber within her bosom; a bosom, which in defiance of her circumstances, was white as snow. Pray, said I, to the horseman, who is that young woman at the border of the bank?

bank? *Who* she is, I really know not, replied the stranger, but *what* she is appeared to me so manifest a little while ago, that I was dismounting to relieve her, when this cruel animal (pointing to his horse) affected to be frightened, flew out of the road, and as you see, got a broken knee and a bloody nose for his pains: for which, though I love him tenderly, I am not sorry: however, if you will continue to hold his bridle—as there is no trusting to man or beast, when the devil has once got possession of him—I will now go and perform my duty.

Saying this, the stranger went to the young woman, gave something from his purse, and immediately returned.

I requested to know what she *said*. I know not my friend, any thing about her, replied the horseman, and the only words I ever heard her utter, were designed to thank me for not suffering my horse to run over her, as she laid fainting along the road.

But had you, said I to the stranger, so little curiosity as not to inform yourself of her history? I had so little cruelty, so little impertinence, answered he; I offered as much as my circumstances allowed; I gave her the modicum I could spare, and *that* was too little a recompence for what she gave *me* in return. What did she give you? A tear, said the man: lookee—'tis still upon the back of my hand, verging to the very finger that brought my tribute-money from the purse; and *there*

there it shall remain: the heart from whence it rose, consecrated it, ere it fell: I will not wipe it away; it will teach me *sensibility*. How camest thou my friend, said I, by these peculiar sentiments? By whom wert thou taught them?

By nature, replied the man.

Whose system hast thou studied?

The system of *nature*, said he.

He had now got his foot again within the stirrup, and thanking me for the trouble I had taken, was preparing to go forward. As it was a fine evening, I requested him to go slowly, that I might enjoy the company of so singular a character.

With the most easy and natural complacence imaginable, he dismounted, joined by my side, and led the

horse in his hand. Within a few paces we saw a boy with a hat in his hand, and in it a bird's nest, which he had just taken, filled with young: just as we passed him, he took one of the callow creatures from the hat, tossed it into the air, and then let it crush itself against the ground. My companion threw the bridle into my hand, and ran to the boy without speaking; whom, after having held for a considerable while suspended by the leg, he thrashed handsomely with his whip, threw him upon the grass, and left him.

Wherefore did you beat the boy so severely, said I?

For the sake of my *system*, rejoined the stranger.

Pre-

Presently we took notice of a person, who (though having lost one of his arms) was extricating a lamb from the brambles, partly with his left hand, and partly with the stump of his right: my companion hurried away to the man with inconceivable eagerness—assisted in the business—shook the maimed foldier (for such he was) very cordially by the hand, and gave him money.

And what is all *this*, said I?

It is my SYSTEM, answered the stranger, it is my SYSTEM: the only rational one in the world: the System of Nature.

It was now almost twilight, and I was about to bid him adieu, not a little struck with the sketch he had exhibited of his temper. At this in-

stant a hare, pursued by a neighbouring dog, crossed our path. The stranger threw his whip at the dog, with the utmost violence, and snapt the leg bone ; then, rubbing his hands joyously together, skipt about, and seemed infinitely delighted.

And pray what taught thee *this* action, I exclaimed ?

My system, said the man (in a tone elevated at least three full notes above his former articulation)

It began about this time to lighten : the thunder ran along the skies, and the hemisphere was in a blaze. The stranger made a dead pause—folded his arms together—dropt upon his knee—bowed his head even to the earth, and went on. Rain succeeded the thunder: I was very thinly habited,
and

and had besides a slight cold upon me. The man saw my distress, complained that the night was insufferably hot, and begged I would carry his great coat upon my shoulders—There was no resisting him. The coat was on me in a moment, and the owner took shelter under an elm-tree, that offered a luxuriant arbourage by the road side. The storm was soon over, and the moon arose in all her softness, elegance, and majesty. The sudden appearance of any glorious object seizes our attention, and the stranger hailed the rising brightness with an unaffected fervor of gratitude.

Pray sir, said I, have you *read* much? The Bible, sir, he replied, and two *other* books.

What are they?

These,

These, rejoined the man, the volume of Nature, and the volume of Shakespear?

Why Shakespear?

Because *one*, is a commentary upon the *other*. Shakespear was born to illustrate Nature: But it grows late, I wish you a very good night, sir. He mounted his horse, and rode on.

I went home, Mr. President—made a sacrifice of all my Annotators, the next morning, to Nature; bought Shakespeare; purchased his whole works; studied my Bible without a Commentary; altered my System; embraced Nature, obeyed her *real* dictates, and from that very time began to recover apace, till, in the end, I got flesh upon my bones,
fight

fight in my eyes, strength in my soul, and quiet at my heart.

C H A P. CVI.

This member had no sooner ended, than every one testified his approbation by clapping his hands; and yet, late as it was in the night, or rather early as it was in the morning, a fourth member arose to address the President.

The person that now stood up, had a deep gloom upon his face, his brow was pursed into a settled frown, and very rigid features (together with a hoarse, querulous voice) rendered him extremely forbidding: yet he had a penetrating eye, and did not want words.

words. In short, he was a downright Freethinker, and thus, to my entire amazement, shewed himself off.

Mr. President, I have this night heard many pleasant, many learned, and many ingenious observations, upon the subject of Human Happiness. But, sir, it often happens that pleasantry, learning, and ingenuity, have nothing at all to do with *matter of fact*. This, I conceive to be the case at present. In *my* notion, we are hunting after a thing that never *was*, never *is*, nor ever *shall* be. If we talk for ever, we shall never talk ourselves into Happiness, and my opinion militates against every man that pretends to have found any rest for the sole of his foot. Sir, I will take upon me to prove, that according to the present govern-

government and establishment of affairs terrestrial, it is impossible a man of sound thinking *should* be happy. The space of territory on which we tread, is too unequally, not to say absurdly divided, to admit of it. I do not speak, sir, but upon deliberation: but after having turned this planet of ours on all sides, I am obliged, upon the plain principles of common sense, to conclude that it is upon the whole, a very moderate planet, and that the contriver of it could be no conjurer.

At this expression, some of the members began to hiss, and to cry, Down, down, down! but the President, observing that the freedom of debate must, on no account, be checked,

checked, called to order, and the Freetinker proceeded.

Yes, Mr. President, I will avow it, in opposition to all the hisses of either bigotry or prejudice:—the world is a bad world, and all that it inherits, little better than “the baseless fabric of a vision.” It is too late to run into the detail, and therefore I shall content myself with a very few arguments. *Why*, Mr. President, should there be disproportions at all, natural, mental, or corporeal? Why such stupendous hills, and deep funk valleys? Why should there be any deformity? Wherefore should *this* poor fellow go pointed at by the faucy finger through life, merely because he hath a bandied leg, a wry neck, or a bunch

bunch upon his back? Is any being created, or are any of its limbs ludicrously distorted by the sports of nature, on purpose to be the laughing-stock of another? What right has the raven to *fly* through the pure air, while the rational draggles it on foot upon the polluted earth? My very dog hath greater speed than his master. Why, for the sake of expedition, could not man have had *four* legs instead of *two*; and why, in the name of reason, are those two unable (bestir themselves as they will) to keep pace with an ass? Truly, sir, I think most matters might be mended. Why should the ordure of the brute be fragrant, while that of the *last best work* of the most sapient Creator is intolerably offensive? Tell me, ye who stand
 forth

forth to defend the supremacy of man, and the dignity of *human nature*, tell me why the most *beautiful* part of it, is so imperfectly framed, as to become a mere thoroughfare for the dirty work of digestion? Wherefore too, is the seat of joy so indelicately made, at the same time, the seat of our actual off-scourings? And why pray, do we boast of our erect figure? I see nothing wherein to plume ourselves, as to *that* prerogative: if we carry our noses nearer to the heavens, we thereby are less sensible of the perfume of vegetation: if we were nearer to the earth, the more exquisite would be the scent of the flowers that adorn its surface: we might *then* smell the violet fresh as it grows: after being cropt, it languishes; and hence it is
manifest

manifest, that the fallad of the horse, is more highly relished than the lord that rides him.

Then again, Mr. President, as to our *appetites*. Can any man of common compassion think upon these, and the vile means by which their greediness is pacified, without quarrelling with the very teeth in his head? Why was I trusted with a periodical passion for the blood of innocence? Why must the lamb leave its pasture, the fish its stream, and the lark her song, for the voracious cravings of a fellow animal?

In regard to *moral* evils, why is the knave allowed, for many prosperous years, the range of a palace, while the good man, yea, even the man after

God's own heart is limited to the gratings of a dungeon?

With respect to *natural* miseries, why am I to be wound up every twelfth hour, like a mere clock, the structure of men's fingers? Wherefore not made to last longer together? Or rather, why am I so crazily constructed as to be in danger of dissolution from ten thousand accidents, and to be actually decaying from the moment I am born? Are not the first ten years of a very niggard appointment of time, either whimpered away in the puling weaknesses of infancy, or trifled out in the frivolousness of childhood? Are not five more groaned away under the smartings of the rod? And, by the bye, Mr. President, what
right

right hath one being to give pain to another, upon *any pretence whatever*? Are not twenty years more, passed under the tyranny, and the slavery of my *passions*? Are not love, hate, jealousy, ambition, avarice, prodigality, all in a conspiracy against me: each, by turns predominant, and all fretting my heart, agonizing my bosom, distracting my head, and tearing my poor victim of a body all to pieces? Is not exquisite joy so contrived, as to do me as great an injury, and shake my frame as violently, as the extreme of grief? Are not many of my days, in most of my years, made often insufferable, generally insipid, by either the languors of sickness, the throbs of anxiety — the miseries of sympathy, and the innumerable revolutions,

lutions, whirled at the peace of my soul, on the pilgrimage of my existence? Are not, moreover, the lees of life (when the vessel of mortality is running out its dregs) every way deplorable? And am I not *then*, again to revert to the first principle, and re-inherit all the decrepitude of the babe, without finding any entertainment in its gewgaw or rattle? Horrible—horrible, most horrible!

In the last scene, when the breath hath deserted my body, why am I——

Here the Freethinker stopt to blow his nose, first begging pardon of the society and their excuse for yielding to *that*, amongst other natural infirmities.

The

The President took this opportunity to break the thread of his diabolical argument by the decision of the hammer. He struck it *forcibly* against the desk, and I could not but fancy I heard something of a *good heart* in the sound: certainly, said I, the President is tired of this wretch's system, and knocks down his sophistry with a becoming indignation.

The Freethinker doubled up his pocket handkerchief disdainfully, bit his lips, and sat gloomy silent.

Without scarce feeling myself rise, I got up, and contrary to all order, stood opposite to the Freethinker, and spoke to him with a loud voice.

C H A P. CVII.

You have given me a good deal of misery, Mr. Freethinker; pray, condescend to reward me now with a little pleasure: answer me but two short questions, and I wish thee a fair journey through the realms of interrogation? Why wert thou not made of most rare and excellent flesh, that instead of *digesting*, thou mightest have been *digested*; and wherefore instead of the nose upon thy face, hadst thou not the unweildy proboscis of an elephant?

I felt my cheek glow and my heart beat against my corset, as I uttered
this,

this, and yet it had like to have been attended with serious consequences.

The freethinker drew his hanger, which he wore to defend himself against the assassination of his fellow animals, and swore, he would put me to death for the insult of calling him freethinker. The poet said, the licence of a stranger to the regulations of the society, ought to plead my apology; the patron observed, that he saw authorship skulk under the pent-house of my eye, and that he should not *protect* me. The priest left me to nature and providence, and Draper protested, as he threw his body, shield-like before me, that if any man dared but to touch a hair of my head, he would eradicate him from the face of the earth.

The confusion now become general, and the President hastily descended to disarm the Freethinker, who was the only person that happened to have cold iron about him: the President, stealing behind, gave his hanger to the Priest, who ran off with it to the waiter: The Poet called the Patron a jackanapes for reflecting on authorship, which produced a sneer from the patron, and that sneer produced a blow from the Poet, and that blow a battle.

The Freethinker, meantime sallied up to Draper, who, with a hearty goodwill gave him a slap upon the face, telling him at the same time, that he would do him for once, the honour to foul his fingers upon a Freethinker. The Freethinker upon this, doubled his fist, and flew upon Draper, while the President declared I deserved thrashing,

thrashing, for being the little insignificant instrument of so much confusion. This innuendo nettled all that was irascible about me, and with my friend Draper's elegant cane, that was lolling indolently against my chair, I favoured the President with as sound a stroke upon the shoulders as could be possibly given by the arm of an angry man. And now, we were drawn up three deep, man to man, in a battle royal, victory remaining for a considerable time doubtful. The Poet, hitting the Patron hard upon the right thigh, hurt his knuckles against the body of a certain solid metal that was there snugly deposited, in a purse of silk: and the patron, in return, struck the man of ink upon the temples, from whence issued a noise like
that

that from an empty vessel being suddenly smitten. By this time I had compelled the President to seek for shelter even in his rostrum; and there, that I might complete my conquest, I pursued the fugitive, and at one blow, fairly knocked him down with his own hammer. Draper's victory too, was by this time manifested, for striking the Freethinker upon the bridge of *that* nose, to which he had so much objection, this audacious asker of questions came to the earth even near enough to smell the perfume of the dust thereof; and the triumphant Draper, (who loved uprightness), stood erect upon his body. At length however, like generous conquerors, we raised our foes: forgiveness was exchanged for the
 pardon

pardon that was invited: the Patron put five pieces into the hand of the Poet, to prove, that patronage was after all, superior to poetry: the Prefident shook me by the hand, and declared himself to blame, giving me at the same time an invitation to visit his cottage in the country, and the Freethinker protested he richly deserved twenty bloody noses for interrupting any man, for the sake of ceremony, in the progress of fair argument. It being now really daylight, and peace ratified, Mr. Draper and I drank a glass of forgiveness to the company, and then departed, like a pair of conquerors.

C H A P. CVIII.

A very beautiful morning was beginning to dawn, as we left the society of Systems; and I was so full of the strange contradictory circumstances I had just been a witness to, that I had no passion even for the long absent arms of the expecting Lucy, and suffered Draper to lead me even where he thought proper. After having walked (for the streets were quite clear from either chairs or coaches) some minutes without speaking, I pulled Draper by the arm, and desired his *System*. To the very bottom of my soul, I hate the very name of system, said he, and yet, as every man must
form

form to himself *some* opinion of this world, and its government, this, Benignus, is mine. I admire the system just as it stands : I can see the hill and dale, bush and briar, dell and dingle, wood and water, lawn and labyrinth of life, without being offended at them, either in the moral or natural world : on the contrary, I think they form a considerable part of its beauty, and even of its convenience : a fig, Benignus, for the smooth path alone ; were it not now and then for the ruggedness of the mountain, we should be insensible to the level of the plain : were it not for hurricanes, we should cease to congratulate one another upon sunshine. I love variety, and the present world pleases me sufficiently upon that account. It
is

is in itself one general up-and-down: the human soul abhors sameness. When Nature turns so prudish as to quit her passion for variety, when she is so far gone, as to paint one tulip, or form one feature exactly like another, it is then time to tremble, Benvignus; for, after that, the world cannot hold together another click of the pendulum: but there is no reason to fear: there are too many charms in the present agreeable system for me to complain of it: it hits happily my rambling temper: all the objects of it are pleasing from their frequent changings; streams love to meander, the very trees twist themselves into a hundred shapes, the many-coloured clouds are shifting every minute before us, wildernesses wind, flowers are
whim-

whimsically varied: the rising light wears at this instant a different face from what it will presently wear: all things gratify my love of vicissitude, and in short, Benignus, I am for a System of variety.

Mr. Draper had just closed his unconnected remarks upon the debates of the night, when he told me that if I would sleep in Dover-street, he would shew me a little manuscript that he found several years ago, as he was strolling in St. James's Park. It is a mere a fragment, said he, and, by the hand, was evidently the work of a female pen. The subject of which it treats, is that which we have this night heard so circumstantially discussed; and if you are not sufficiently sick of talking about happiness, I will
give

give it you directly on my getting home.

I agreed to the conditions, having indeed less relish for a mistress at that time, than for meditation ; and, upon our arrival at Draper's, he very obligingly examined his papers, and, after a pretty long search, found that, which will be offered to the reader in the next chapter.

C H A P. CIX.

As soon as I withdrew to my chamber, I opened the paper, and read the following sentiments of a mind tranquilised by the angel of content. It was entitled, " The offerings of gratitude," and began thus.

—Praise

—Praise be to the benignity of Heaven! my fortune is not great, but my frugality is in proportion to it, and hence it is that my cup is full and my heart satisfied. And yet are there not some sad disproportions; do we not see them, do we not feel them? What is to be done by those who are born only to walk about a wide world without a friend? To what resources shall such unfortunates retreat? Shall they beg? Let them beware of the beadle. Shall they borrow? Let them dread the prison. Shall they steal their own necessities from the superflux of another? Let them tremble at the halter. Must they really, notwithstanding, exist? Is self-murder the crime against which the everlasting hath fixed his cannon?

VOL. V.

I

Alas!

Alas! what course — what honest course is to be taken? Could nature have contrived no method to have satisfied the desires and wants of her *poorest* children without their finding a succedaneum in criminal or illicit expedients? Could she have made no constitutional distinctions, proportioned to the scantiness of circumstances? Was it not possible to edge the palate of poverty only for the herbs of the field, the flowers of the forest, and the nectar of the running water? No: It appears not. Not a single link in the great chain that binds us to one another—that chain, which, descending from heaven to earth, is properly the cestus of society, the girdle which draws the individual to the species—not a single link of this
 must

must be broken. The mechanism of Providence, intricate yet regular, may not be entangled, or injured, by the fantastical alterations of innovating man. What then is to be done? Hath nature given being to any thing on purpose to torment it—given it eyes, to see that elegance which it may not share; wants, which though perceived shall not be gratified; appetites, which solicit in vain; and feelings which are to be disappointed: hath she, like an improvident parent, bestowed life, without the ordinary means of contrivance for its continuity? *Then* should we with justice, refuse to offer praises to the power from whom we have received no benefits.

But is this really, at any time, the case? Ah no: Truth, with a smile, utters a sentiment the farthest from it possible. Far be such propense barbarity from the more hospitable designs of our governor?

——Praise be to the benignity of nature! where wealth is denied, behold how liberally she gives the proper equivalents; hands to toil—head to project—spirits to persevere, or talents to entertain. Into the arms of the indigent she hath put strength, muscles more vigorous, form more athletic, or else she allots an advantageous versatility,—a brain prolific—a soul for enterprize, or some other capacity of providing for the exigencies of the day. *All*, or *any* of these, produce proper supplies. Happy in
my

my *own* situation, doth the sigh
 heave, and the tear fall for the diffi-
 culty in which my fancy represents
 the cottager involved? Hath the God
 of nature refused her benignity to
him? Here truth again settles the
 point agreeable to the benignity of
 Providence. Congratulate, faith she,
 the labourer, upon the bread that is
 to be earned only by the sweat of his
 brow: from his wants arise at once
 his virtues and his joys. Consider
 well what those joys produce.

They produce health, who diets
 upon the ears of the sheaf, that he
 may snore at night upon the stalks,
 formed without difficulty into a bed
 of tranquility. The sun, it is true,
 scorches; but then the poor man is
seasoned to it, and while he "sweats in

the eye of Phœbus," he stoops to the exercise of the fickle, whistles chearily in his progress, and tells blithly to his companion the story of his last frolic. It must be owned, likewise, that the rain often invades him at his work ; but then it must be considered that the hedges are generally contiguous, and when they are not, the passing shower is grateful to the heated husbandman. I will not deny the coarseness of his raiment ; but then it is the warmer upon that account. His food also is far from being delicate ; but yet it is for that very reason the more wholesome.

The sun hath just made his "golden set" in the west : the hours of labour are over. Now then look at the cottager. The fickle is laid across his shoulder : his eldest boy trudges
after

after him with the gleanings of pasture in the one hand, and the emptied scrip in the other : his watch-dog, taught to keep the cloaths from the pilfering fingers of the vagabond, trots, pleased with his servitude, before him : the zephyrs of the evening bestow the gradual coolness ; and the song of the nightingale attends him over the leas. Truth cannot yet be persuaded to leave him : let us attend then, to the finishings of her picture.

The husbandman is now within sight of his shed ; he is this minute plucking the latch of his straw-built cottage. The housewife hath left her wheel, and the children of this prolific matron, are playing the gambols of infancy upon the plain, clean, brick floor : the father's kiss echoes

on every lip; the nurse's nonsense sinks the sweet dimple in every face; the little ones, for the sake of company, as well as convenience, lie socially together: the parents retire to the nervous embraces of each other: hence another testimony of the father's virility soon appears. What of that? he only piques himself upon the addition of his family, dandles the suckling upon his knee at his return from work, melts even into tears as it reposes on the bosom of the mother, and only works the harder to maintain it.

—Praise be to the benignity of heaven! all I see is right. For my own part, I do not envy even the cottager. My children are graced with all the elegancies of the human figure;

figure; complexions clear, eyes brilliant, lips rubied, shapes exact. One is indeed at present indisposed, but the warm season is at hand, and the rose shall again revisit his cheek. One *is not*, but it died in the most innocent part of life: the pang of the parent is hushed in the bosom of piety, and who knows, but it may now be the guardian cherub of my *other* little ones. My husband is said to be deformed, but the power that permits him to be so, hath suited my eyes to his situation, and I cannot but think him handsome. He is now asleep, wearied with providing for his best beloved, and her dear associates! what a blessing is repose? I will go sit by his side, guard his slumbers, and watch the hour of his awaking.

Happy

Happy infancy! my youngest is sporting with its plaything: Happy childhood! my eldest is delighting itself with the pictures that illustrate the fable, painted and written to the tenderness of the rising ideas: Happy maturity! that bestows upon one of either sex, those attractions which make them a world to each other. Ah! what sweet sensations move the heart of a wife, a parent, and a friend!

But, as the eternal scale is for ever turned by the angel of indulgence, let me end as I began.

Praise be to the benignity of Providence: it is to that we owe the felicities of earth. Who is he that can look round him, and still be a murmurer? who is he that can accept the
 blessings

blessings on every side presented to him, yet cease to be virtuous? Praise be to the benignity of Providence, world without end.

C H A P. CX.

After having read the fragment twice over, with an attention that it appeared to merit, I went to bed: but never had I less inclination to sleep, since I came into this world. Every thing that had passed before me in the course of the night, kept my eyes open, and my thoughts at work. The debates I had heard at the Society of Systems; the battle which put an end to them; the situation of my own heart in regard to Lucy, whom I had severely disappointed;

the

the contrariety of sentiment, reverberated from man to man, wheresoever I went ; and the doctrine of the fragment, all united their efforts, not only to prevent me from the enjoyment of repose, but from possessing while awake the smallest degree of serenity. The more knowledge I acquired of the characters of men, and the more researches I made after happiness, the less was I pleased with my survey, and the less felicity did I acquire.

Nor was I a little astonished to find the system mongers, all supporting an opposite opinion, and yet none of them cherishing that, which I then imagined to be the summum bonum : the pleasures of a mistress, were never so much as glanced at, nor did even Draper himself profess to adopt the System of Love : on the contrary, he
 avowed

avowed himself devoted only to the joys of variety.

Unhappy is he, who, in the days of his youth traverses this intricate world, without a guide; and of all other preposterous passions, the most preposterous is *that* which induces an orphan of fortune to trust himself to mankind, with neither experience to direct, prudence to advise, nor œconomy to regulate. Let no man that is new to the active scenes of a city, ever venture again into a metropolis, unattended: let no man indulge his inclinations for *travelling*, without first considering that if he is miserable at home, he must tread warily indeed, if he does not *increase* that misery abroad. Let no man rush into the tumults of life without a virtuous monitor:

monitor : in a word, let every *Telemachus* tremble at the conduct, that is not first sanctified by the approbation of a *Mentor* !

With regard to my reflections upon the Society of Systems, and upon the irregularity of my own life, together with the constant fluctuation of my thoughts from opinion to opinion they were truly painful ; and at length wrought so strongly upon my imagination, that I could no more repress the sentiments that rose to my lip ; but folding my hands with an earnestness dictated by my heart, I thus petitioned for tranquility, the only Power that was able to inspire it.

Condescend to guide an unestablished wanderer, thou Deity of Truth !
 condescend to direct one, whom the
 con-

contradictions of men have led into the thorny ways of inextricable dilemma! thou only art equal to the disentanglement; thou, whom I have so often heard arraigned; whose benevolence, mildness, will, wisdom, and every other attribute, I have seen so often misrepresented! thou, who by one, art painted unkind and implacable; by a second, careless, and supine; by a third inefficient, and powerless; by a fourth, weak and imperfect—by a fifth, ununiform, inconsistent, and variable: now depicted with the false emblem of a desolating sword—now with the laurel of a Creator's triumph at the downfall and degradation of thine own frail and fearful creatures. From the anarchy of these ideas do Thou call
my

my sentiments into order, and into rectitude ! do Thou—power of peace ! parent of nature ! and regulator of the heart, even when enthralled by the shackles of sophistical men ! do thou guide me into the right way—breathe into the spirit of thy inexperienced subject—oh everlasting essence, that truth which surpasseth all systems—give me that genuine unadulterated devotion, warm from the heart, and obedient to its impulses—do thou rescue me from the chicane of wit, the dreams of dulness, and the casuistry of theoretic madmen : make me—henceforward to confess what I feel ; to suspect what I hear ; examine what I see, and steadfastly to believe only those sentiments, whether written in volumes, or spoken from
the

the lips, that pourtray thee what thou really art, foe to controversy, father of the fatherless, and friend of simplicity.

C H A P. CXI.

Somewhat relieved by this address, I rose at the usual hour, and found Draper, contrary to my expectation, at the breakfast table.

I am going, my dear Benignus, said he, upon an affair of business that demands the nicest punctuality, and it is for that purpose you see me up at this unseasonable hour; but pray, my good lad, what is the matter? you look as pale and dismal this morning as a phantom: what! it could not

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sleep

sleep without its bed-fellow, I find: come then, drink its dish of coffee, and away to its Lucy, for health's sake.

I could not help telling him the state of my mind; and in particular, the pain I felt from the constant perturbation I was in, for the want of acting upon some stationary principle. You put me in mind, said Draper, of a man I once knew, who, having heard much, and read more, pinn'd his faith upon the sleeve of another, and, at last, indulged himself in such habits of credulity, that he had no opinion of his own.

I requested a sketch of the person's story. This fellow, continued Draper, was an old school-mate of mine: he was always fond of books, but one of those

those random readers, who run over volumes, to use the common phrase, as a cat runs over an harpsichord: this absurdity grew as *he* grew, till about the time that he came to his fortune, he was so thoroughly variable, that, read whatever he might, he always adopted the precept of the page in hand. One day he was a sound philosopher, and on the the morrow philosophy was driven out, as it were by the wedge of politics. He was an arrant literary turncoat, ever changing, and never the better for it. To humour the system of one, he committed private violences, for the sake of public benefits; and had thereby brought himself within an inch of the gallows. To accommodate himself to two writers upon health, who differed

materially upon the subject, he gave each of their systems a month's practical experiment: thus, in conformity to the one, he eat, drank, and slept, at stated strokes of the pendulum; and, in compliance with the other, whenever he was hungry he eat, when drowsy he slept, and when thirsty he drank till he was satisfied. A poem, on the pleasures of melancholy, written by Milton, made him, I remember, sit freezing under a yew tree, in the drear of December; and a second, on the joys of chearfulness, by the same author, induced him to collect all his friends together, and get drunk three nights running, for the sake of conviviality. A little treatise, written many years ago, upon politeness and manners, made him
alter

alter the cut of his coat, the clip of his nails, the squeeze of his hat, the bend of his bow, and the slide of his foot. He shifted his religion much oftner than his linen. In his youth he read Virgil, and in order to follow the precepts laid down by that poetical husbandman, he commenced farmer and grafter; turned out his old tenants, and cultivated his own estate, upon Virgilian principles. Soon after this, the Iliad of Homer falling in his way, he sold his land, sent his oxen to Smithfield, and, inspired by the heroism of Hector, listed for a foldier, lost his limb, and came gloriously back to his native land, with the stump of honour. But now, a discourse that was put into his hand at his return, on the pleasures of re-

tirement, and the great *riches* to be found by a wise Christian, in poverty, over-ruled him—pliable as ever—to purchase a cottage, where, to heighten the scene, he read Cowley, Thomson, and all the descriptive poets. After this, he unluckily dipt into an essay on taste, and the decoration of garden grounds, which soon made him forsake his cottage, to embellish a curious spot, which, with the last folly-money remaining out of a competent income, he bought, and was proceeding to build, and lay out, exactly according to the *lucidus ordo* of his author, when, unfortunately, in the very crisis of his putting the finishing stroke to his house, he paid a visit to a friend in Worcestershire; in his way to which place, he marked out, as he
 rode

rode along, a spot still more convenient for his purpose, and commanding exactly such a site as the author recommended. This discovery set him upon the gallop, till he found the owner of the ground, whom he addressed that very evening upon the subject of the property. As he previously declared money should not part them, the owner, who designed to sell, made his valuation accordingly; and now nothing remained, Benignus, but a single objection. Upon putting his hand into his purse, he found it contained only forty guineas. Upon recollecting the state of affairs when he last drew upon his banker, he discovered—nothing. Alas, poor Jack Bookwit—what could he do, Benignus? There are, my friend, events

in life, which unfettle us from top to bottom, inside and outside, at once. A hard blow given by the hand of fortune, when we expect a smile, has occasioned many a whimsical exit out of this world. Such was the case with my old school-fellow, Jack Bookwit: the poor man departed very disconsolately out of the sight of the land-owner, unbitted his horse, which he turned to the clover of a contiguous field, made a melancholy use of the bridle, and was found dangling by the neck, the next morning, a sacrifice to SYSTEMS, and a memento to the children of men, (and, amongst others, to thee, Benignus) now and then to follow their own noses.

When

When Mr Draper had concluded his story, he observed, that the hour of his appointment was come, and (shaking me cordially by the hand) departed. I was now never more puzzled what to do; my sentiments had undergone a surprising change within a few hours, and I was at a loss whether to return to my mistress, or endeavour by absence, to wean myself from a connexion, that a little serious meditation had taught me to believe dishonourable. While I was debating betwixt passion and conscience upon this subject, a porter brought the following card, and five minutes afterwards, the postman presented me with the letters that succeed it. I shall offer them to the reader in the order they came to hand.

C H A P.

C H A P. CXII.

L E T T E R I.

To Benignus.

Dear Nig.

Fortune turns in my favour : I am a thousand pound man, and am this day to take a snack at two o'clock with a couple of friends at the White Bear. If you have not yet found happiness, and have an afternoon to spare, you will certainly find her in the company of Jerry Smack, Jack Blake, and your quondam acquaintance

ALEXANDER GREEN.

LETTER

L E T T E R II.

What can possibly detain Benignus so long from Cavendish square; and where can he secure himself from the daily assiduities of Benjamin?

ALICIA DARLINGTON.

L E T T E R III.

Cruel, ungenerous Benignus,

How have I deserved this neglect:
I have not slept since your departure;
but Draper, I foresee, will seduce
you from the fond, and deserted
arms of

LUCY.

P. S. You forget that the jeweller is to call this morning about the earrings: but if you have resolved to leave me, I insist on your not giving yourself the trouble to pay for those trinkets, which I scorn to receive, but as the testimonies of your passion. Oh Benignus, how have you had the heart to treat me in this manner!

Adieu.

I was variously affected by the perusal of these epistles, particularly by the two last: I was ashamed at having so ill returned my cousin's invitations; and I was very unwilling to cultivate any farther the connexion, that had already seduced me into such numberless

berless omissions. My heart, I confess, pleaded but too pathetically the cause of love and Lucy ; I felt the abstinence I imposed on myself in its utmost severity, yet I was now so convinced of the impropriety, that, cost me what it would, I was determined to break acquaintance with this bewitching Syren, that was charming me every hour more powerfully.

In pursuit of this laudable resolution, I would not even trust myself to the temptation of a parting interview, but sitting down to the writing-desk, while the tears were in my eyes, penned an answer to my mistress, wherein I, like a simpleton as I was, entered into long arguments upon the necessity of leaving her. Among other things, equally cogent, I told her,
that,

that, though I loved her tenderly, my conscience demanded the sacrifice of a separation, which, however agonizing, must ensue: that, her company captivated me, even to the destruction of all other attentions, due to friends, relations, and what I owed to my own character: that I found myself unfit for any pleasure, but the pleasures of her society; and that, as those were not sanctified by any laws, either divine or human, even the taste of the times, and the imprimatur of fashion, could not, upon deliberation, reconcile me to their enjoyment: that I lamented the impossibility of entering into a nearer, dearer, and more sacred alliance, without incurring that censure, which would inevitably attend such a measure:

but

but that, nevertheless, I should always think it my duty, as it would always be my inclination, to contribute to her convenience, comfort, and accommodation, as to money-matters; and intreated, that my departure from such scenes of transport, might be considered in the right light; not as the frivolous passion of a libertine, tired with the possession of his object, and upon the look-out for another; but the resolutions of a man who dared no longer yield to feelings that are manifestly repugnant to that delicacy of conduct which alone preserves and sustains the character.

After having finished my letter, which, all points considered, was surely no bad effort of philosophy, I read it over with a triumph that certainly

tainly arose from the sense of a part well acted. On reading it over a *second* time, the sigh involuntarily broke from me at the name of Lucy: I found tender ideas again rushing upon me; and, lest I should relapse, I had the fortitude to inclose a bank bill, just for her present use, sealed it up with a religious haste, lest my resolution should relax, and dispatched it by that servant of Draper's, who had been conversant in messages of gallantry, since he came into the service of that gentleman.

I had scarce delivered it, before I wished it again in my hand, and was more than once tempted to run after the messenger, and recover it: but, virtue at last prevailed over passion, and I suffered in silence: nor dared I
wait

wait the return of the servant, lest Lucy's answer should contain such softening arguments, as it would be impossible to resist. To visit Mrs. Darlington, however, was a business to which I was at present by no means equal; I was not prepared for the company of an innocent woman, and an amiable family: *That*, therefore, which at another moment would have been an insipid invitation, now became really acceptable; and I considered the society at the White Bear, as a critical refuge from the anguish of my reflections.

To this assignation then I attended, as soon as I could rise from the ingenious fingers of Monsieur Crimpa; and after I had left word for Draper, that I should certainly return in the

evening, I went out of the house with a heavy heart.—

C H A P. CXIII.

In my way to the White Bear, I endeavoured, as much as possible, to command my thoughts from the accustomed object of their tender contemplation; and particularly adverted them to the various adventures I had met in the metropolis, in my search after Happiness. Full of these ideas, and wondering to find opinions so extremely dissimilar, in beings who were of the same species, and ultimately in pursuit of the very same good, I was walking along in a sort of philosophical perplexity, when my curiosity

was

was attracted by a groupe of females, whom I found sitting upon the lower stone-step of the tavern door. As they were employed in a matter that strongly interested my feelings, I stood still to observe them. There were two women and a child nestled between them: one of the women untied a dirty looking bundle, from which, she took a miscellaneous heap of broken victuals, which appeared to be the scrapings of twenty tables. Having very cautiously divided it into two equal shares, with the strictest regard to justice, (insomuch, that I believe she held the scale so evenly, a preponderating crumb prevailed neither way) she offered the parted spoil to the choice of her companion. When this point was settled, both the

women gave something from their portion to the infant ; which, neither *having*, nor seeming to *want* the comfort of cloathing, looked eagerly upon the business in hand, as if, at first, it thought itself not quite so fairly treated.

When art spreads not her pageantries before us, nature is frugally and expeditiously gratified: Their meal was the meal of a moment.

Presently, a little stockinglefs boy, hearty, and happy in his nakedness, came running up with a can of water; the women took it, shook hands, pledg'd health, stroaked the boy on the head, kissed the child, and all was over.

I might now go up to the door, which they intercepted without disturbance.

turbing them: I am sorry to make you get up, good folks, said I, but surely you have chosen an unfortunate place to dine in? the door of a tavern is liable to a thousand interruptions. They got up. What a pretty spoken Gentleman, (said one to the other); yes, God love your honour, to be sure, we are often interrupted, but what little *we* have is soon eaten: our lap is a table, our apron the cloth, and any place serves our turn: boy, dust away the crumbs with your hat, that the gentleman may not soil his shoes.

The humility of this expression touched me; what a distinction is here, (said I softly) without any intrinsic difference? Can the want of a decent dress occasion all this? at that

rate; if my cloaths were put upon the poor man's back, *he* would assume my consequence, and *I* should, invested with his tatters, sink, of course, into his obsequiousness?

All this time the mendicants, instead of the sallies of pleasantry, and satisfaction that before zestted their repast, were beginning to mumble out their tale: the notes of content were soon changed into the whinings of complaint, and they now seemed to be as wretched, as they were before happy. A strange alteration, thought I! however, I was determined to do scrupulous justice, and therefore, threw them four six-pences. A scramble ensued: the boy caught up one, the woman with the child the three others, and made off, while the defrauded

frauded creature that remained, who was lame, in the most piercing key of reprobation, sent, upon the wings of the wind, such a volley of curses after her comrade, that I heartily despised myself for having acted so injudiciously, even where I imagined I was dealing so exactly equitable. The cheats, turning into an alley, were soon out of sight, and the lame woman renewed her good wishes for their immediate perdition; and just as I had got into the entry of the tavern, she prevented my repairing her injury, by fairly telling me, in a language tolerably intelligible, that if I had been inclined to do a good thing, and be cursed to me, I might have parted the money myself, and not set poor folks a scuffling for a trifle, that

might break a good-will of so much service to both.

I did not like the malice that I saw gathering in her countenance, and I therefore hurried into the house: as no servants were in the long entry that led to the interior parts of the tavern, the jade had the fauciness to attack me through the key-hole, as I took shelter in an apartment that opened into the passage; and in a voice, which I am sure came from the bottom of her soul, she told me, I put her in mind of the brat, who set a whole parish a little while ago, by the ears, about a shabby twenty pound that was left to poor folks, by Parson Placid, his guardian.

The name of Placid, which was really that of my late excellent protector,

teetor, immediately aroused my attention; and, without any apprehension from the offended woman's present state of mind, I opened the door, and looking steadfastly in her face, desired to know if she had ever *seen* Mr. Placid? Seen him, (said she) yes, I have seen him, for I lived at the market-town, three mile from the village where he did duty; and I heard my husband talk a good deal of that young fellow, who fell heir to the parsonage on Minister Placid's death.

Why, *who* is your husband then, said I? Ah, fie upon him (said the woman) why, Gerrard Brown, the grocer of Grassington, is my husband. And where is he now said I? He's a vile rogue be where he will, replied the beggar, and I will sooner starve than
see

see his face again : a good-for nothing fellow indeed ; to go up to London, and spend his substance, among a parcel of prostitutes, and come down to his honest pains taking lawful wife in the country, by whom he has had lawful children, and give her the *defection* of bad disorders. Oh Gerrard Brawn, Gerrard Brawn, what a villain you are. Have not I been from sun's rise to sunset, behind the counter, dropping the good six-pences in the till, and saving my farthing where-soever I could nip it out of my servings, till you was a better man than any in town, and could shew your face with the 'squire himself ; and was all my care to be rewarded with a —, you dirty fellow : Oh Gerrard Brawn, Gerrard Brawn, what a villain you are !

The

The poor wretch, here wept bitterly, and I was resolved to know the particulars of a story that already became so interesting, for I had heard enough to convince me that I was now in company with the wife of the very grocer, (of notorious memory,) whom I left bruised in-bed at the inn, when I was coming to London. As Mrs. Brawn's appearance was not likely to gain admission into a tavern, I asked her, if she could accompany me to any place where we might have half an hour's conversation; for that I believed I had once travelled with her husband, and was surprised to see the wife, whom I remembered he praised for her œconomy, so soon reduced from a plentiful situation; and would do every thing in my power, to effect a reconciliation.

Mrs.

Mrs. Brawn appeared sensible of my kindness, and, with many courtesies, hopped away to a little public house, at some distance, where she told me her history; the heads of which were, that, "upon her husband's return into the country, he had communicated to her, a smarting instance of his infidelity; which, being discovered, produced an altercation that terminated in a domestic battle; the fruits of which, were a bruised leg, and a separation: for Mrs. Brawn, declared she would die a thousand deaths rather than have any farther concern with a man, who not only injured her virtuous sheets, (as she called them,) but, who had beaten her into the bargain, and given her a *defection*, that she believed would carry her to the grave. She farther informed me, that

if

if there was any excuse to be made for the grocer, it was his having the misfortune to find his daughter with child, upon his going to London, by a fellow not worth a groat; and that, she did not know, but upon his perceiving this, it might turn his head, as it were, and make him go astray, to kill care: that, as to his daughter, he told the mantua-maker, to whom she was bound 'prentice, he would have nothing more to say to her board or lodgings, and so she was turned out of doors; and as for Gerrard himself, she knew nothing at all about him; and had rather continue to eat the coarse and casual bread of beggary, than hear, see, or have any thing more to do with him. She confessed, moreover, that she was in a deplorable way, having no friends alive,

ex-

except her daughter, whom she could by no means hear of; and therefore, she was the more sorry I had given the poor woman, I saw with her, a temptation to run away from her; adding, that, as they had been accustomed to beg together, and divide their gettings very punctually since she first met with this associate in poverty: it would be a lonesome thing, to ask for charity without a friend of any kind, either to tell her luck to, or to sooth her in her many disappointments. However, she asked my pardon for the ill language she had given me; and, (though she said she did not deserve it) yet, if I could be good enough to spare her a small matter, she would limp about to the places where her companion had been used to take her *charity-stands*; and,

if

if she found her, would endeavour to buy her company back again, with half my bounty.

This was really very affecting, and I gave, at once to her fidelity, and misfortunes, the tear of undissembled pity.

Here, Mrs. Brawn, said I, make use of this silver, till I can do you a more essential service; and pray let me know, where I can see you to-morrow morning.

She made the appointment at the house she then was; and after once more asking forgiveness for the abuse she had bestowed on me, limped away in search of her colleague.

C H A P. CXIV.

The sensations excited by this unexpected adventure, and the discovery attending it, drew from me one of those fervent ejaculations so peculiar to my temper.

And art thou so *soon* rewarded (said I), art thou *already* punished for thy hardness of heart, thou Benefactor of Raspins? Didst thou come up to the metropolis, in the pride of thy circumstances, to see an only daughter, of whose sobriety thou boasted, and didst thou find her the victim of a villain? and hast thou lost the gainful partner of all thy thriftiness—she, who so well knew how to
turn

turn the penny, while thou wert smoking the pipe of luxury in thy parlour? Perhaps thou art, by this time, *thyself* in the sad condition of him, whom, on the journey, thou refusedst to relieve, yea, ever so little; or, it may be thou, art in a situation, still *more* pitiable;—lamenting the ruin of a daughter, whom thy rashness hath made the more exquisitely unhappy, and the desertion of a partner, the old assistant of thy cares and joys, whom thy incontinence hath reduced to beggary. If that is the case, thy fate is to be compassionate, and I have a sorrow in my sympathizing breast, even for thee.

This was one of those theatrical soliloquies I have already celebrated,

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in

in which a man *thinks* as loud, as well-bred people choose at *any time* to speak: so that, what *should* have been *aside*, was very plainly heard by the landlady of this mansion. On rising to pay for the beer I had given to Mrs. Brawn, I beheld our hostess with a pot in the one hand, and holding up the corner of her apron to her eyes with the other, standing still as a statue behind me: then perceiving I had done *thinking*, she exclaimed with an audible voice, “The Lord have mercy upon me! I never heard any thing half so moving, since I was able to turn the cock: the Lord have mercy upon us! ’tis as good as a *sermon*.”

Upon laying down the money on the table, she renewed her applauses,
and

and with great vehemence, "wished with all her soul, that I had not two-pence in my pocket, nor a shirt to my back, that she might give me the price of the beer, and one of her husband Jeffery's shirts (with *frills* to the bosom) as a reward for my *vartue* and *larning*: both which, she protested, were dearer to her than the flesh upon her bones." I paid her a compliment upon her love of *vartue*, returned thanks for her good wishes, and set forward once more for the White Bear.

C H A P. CXV.

Without meeting any new preventative in my way, I at length took by the hand my friend Mr. Green; who, with his usual rapidity of utterance, told me, that by my staying so long, he supposed I had been making some of my benevolent blunders, and had given me over: but, come my dear boy, added he, sit down, and make yourself merry: I am a thousand-pound man: I have turned up trumps: the game's my own, and lookee, lookee, my lad of a thousand, here here I have the honours in my hand: you must understand, that I have been within four perpen-

pendiculars—four bricks walls—my dear youth, since our adventure of the eating house; but—whew—what of that? a snap of a nut for misfortune: I *played* out; I got my liberty, by general consent of all their paste-board majesties: a pair-royal of kings sanctified my freedom. You must know, a rich rascal, who made a break of it, came into jail to shew his poverty and honesty: I know the fellow, when he flourished like a fig-tree; marked him down, soon found that the thing was a sure lay, and now my boy, he is (by Heaven's, and *my* assistance) as penniless as he ought to have been before he sneaked into prison. Oddsbobs that's true, —he must not starve neither—here waiter, pray pull the bell.—Here,

waiter, carry this guinea to Fleet-prison, to one Doublecrack, with the compliments of Alexander Green, esq. But I beg a thousand pardons: my joy makes me as bungling as yourself, Benignus—give me your hand—Pray gentlemen, know the prince of simplicity, and the pink of liberality—this is, Benignus, the promising lad you heard me mention—Pray Niggy, know my friends: this is Jack Blake—this Jerry Smack—there, there,—now is it over—now you are old friends—Come forth then long purse, and to a laudable purpose—to entertain four of the worthiest fellows, perhaps that ever despised a guinea.

This was the first opportunity either I, or any body else had, to
open

open our lips; for Green not only engrossed the conversation, but gave me so often the squeeze of welcome, and led me so heartily through the ceremonies of introduction, that I could only humour his motions, as fast as my legs could carry me, and bow to the company as frequently as he thought proper to announce me to them; sometimes under the name of Niggy, sometimes as his Pink of Liberality; and sometimes as his Lad of a Thousand.

The appearance of dinner (the profusion of which, bespoke the situation of the gambler's pocket) put a short period to the eloquence of this strange mortal, who was so truly elevated by the present flushings of his prosperity, that he said, and did, a thousand

things, which in a calmer state of mind than I then enjoyed, might have inspired merriment; and which, even as it was, protected me from melancholy. He desired to know how many my Benevolence had saved from the kennel? how many it had promoted from the kitchen to the parlour? who I had rescued from the ditch; and how many harpies I had permitted to put their hands into my breeches pocket?

I venerate the gentleman's spirit and sensibility (said Blake, whom I now discovered to be the person that I had thrashed with the hammer, which, as president, he commanded) I have, before to-day, seen an evidence of the goodness of his heart; and though we have exchanged a
word

word or two more than is agreeable, I dare say we shall henceforward agree perfectly together, upon all good-natured occasions *nem. con.*

We now shook hands, in testimony of total forgiveness, and forgetfulness, of every thing that happened at the society of systems: and then Green drank a glass to our better acquaintance; declared that he loved us both better than his purse strings, and that, as far as his thousand pound would go, he was at our service.

C H A P. CXVI.

Dinner being over, Mr Green said it was always a rule with him to drink
the

the founder of the feast ; and therefore, said he, (pouring out some wine into all the glasses) here's Mr. Devereux Doublecrack. This ceremony over, Mr. Blake asked me what I thought of the speakers of the society ? D—n societies, said Green ; it is impossible for a man to talk of societies, till he is a little *elucidated* by the juice of the grape : for my part, I can never argue till I am happy, and I never am happy without the assistance of this same rosy-coloured deity Bacchus. Come, about with it, my cash actually weighs me down : in pity help me to *liquify* some of it, dear lads.

Bacchus ever fair and young,
Drinking joys did first ordain ;

Bacchus'

Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
 Drinking is——

Come, here's John Dryden's health—
 here's to the memory of the everlasting
 John Dryden.

Never saw I any creature so little
 able to support good luck, and a
 happy hand of cards, as this Alexan-
 der Green: his hilarity became more
 and more animated every minute:
 he sung catches; he struck me in the
 violence of his friendly professions,
 many times upon, first the shoulder,
 then the thigh; swore at the same
 time, that I was a lad of a thousand;
 that I should not leave him till his
 purse was as light as eleven pence;
 he affected to detest every thing but
 Champagne; and at last grew so out-
 rageously

rageously kind, frolicsome and funny, that he leapt up and mounted the table, insisted that we should all do the same, and drink out of our hats by general consent.

These sallies of delirious joy lasted for near two hours, at the end of which, Green had really exhausted his spirits, till he fairly “yawned at alteration,” and fell asleep in his chair.

And now, Messrs. Blake and Smack began to shew off, particularly the latter; who, understanding that I had a country-house, and a garden now in full bloom, was led into his favourite train of conversation, which was what he called, “rural felicity;” and, after wishing that he was *out of trade*, that he could live for ever
amongst

amongst the “roses and posies,” thus began.

“Oh Heavens, Benignus! and have you left so sweet a part of the country, at this time of the year too, for this vile pestilent congregation of vapours, the city of London? Why, fir, I would give half what I am worth in the world, to live in such a retreat as yours. I am the most miserable lump of money that ever existed; for, as I always say, and as all other wise men have said before me, what are riches without health? When I came first from Hull in Yorkshire, to this town, I was quite another sort of a thing to what I am now—quite a different person, as master Green that’s now asleep very well knows: my eyes were black, my forehead was
white,

white, my cheeks were red, my hair was brown; and, in short, I was within an ace, of what you might call a handsome man. And yet, Mr. Benignus, pray look at me now—quite changed you see:—an absolute *metamorphose*, as the poet has it—quite altered my friend. I am even “like Patience near the Monument (for I live in Laurence-lane), smiling at Grief.” But no matter for that, I shall bring it about yet; for you must know, I intend to take a bit of a box in the country towards Kennington, which Mr. Launcelot Squib, my apothecary says, is the very heath of health. Yes Benignus, and there I mean to live amongst the *salutiferous* gales of rural life, as the poet has it: I ha’n’t time for such journeys on
work-

working days, but if you have a mind; I'll take a trip with you there next Sunday, along with my friend Blake, who has a snug little piece of property there himself; have you not, Mr. Blake?

Before Mr. Blake had time to reply, Mr Smack proceeded to enquire into the taste of my "rural felicity;" whether I admired quick-fets or box-hedges, or the humours of the yew-tree? Whether I was for ever-greens, or *monthlys*? and whether I chose naturals or artificials; the open air, or hot beds?"

When I told Mr. Smack, that I valued myself chiefly upon an excellent fish-pond, that was in the centre of my garden, he cried out in a tone of envy: "Ah Benignus! what a
happy

happy man you ought to be; and yet you must be miserable too, for otherwise you never could think of sewing yourself up in this dungeon of darkness, now

The lark begins to sing,
And linets take the wing;

as the poet says. If I was in your place, I would take the cold bath every morning, till I clean and cleverly brought round my complexion: the cold bath, sir, is *prescribed* by all your *physicians* here, without exception, unless in particular cases: it is a bracer of the solids; it will wind you up as tight as a drum: why, even at my little hole in Laurence-lane, what do you think I do? why, I make my servant pump me four pails-full of water every

every morning, and set it in the cellar, into which, as soon as ever I am up, I soufe head over heels, and so brace my solids in a brewing tub.

And pray, do you find any relief from this immersion, said I, Mr. Smack?

Why, I think I do, (he replied with great gravity) I think I do; I certainly am not so yellow as I was: it is not like a pond, or a river, or a ditch, or a regular bath, to be sure; *Ars not est natural*, as the poet says. But its a reasonable good make-shift too. While you stay in town, Benignus, (if you come so far) I beg you will use me like a friend, and dive in my vessel as often as you like.

Here he looked me full in the face, and shaking his head, as if he did not

like the prospect, assured me that I was going very fast. You begin to change, said he, I can tell you that: your cheek is upon the turn: I see the claw of the crow, as the poet says, under your eye: aye, aye, here it is, pressing upon the pupil, as yellow as a *colly-flower*. If you have any regard for your complexion, dip immediately; dip my dear friend, and keep yourself out of the jaundice; or else, as the poet says, you'll be just like the lady, who

“ Never told her love,

“ But grew *green* and *yellow* with melancholy,

“ Tho' she was before red as the damask rose.

All this time, Green was repairing his spirits, and Mr. Blake, who had drank pretty freely, was listening to
the

the story of "rural felicity," with his eyes half-closed, and his head leaning in his hand. Mr. Smack now adverted to the affair of the fish-pond; and after particular inquiries as to its *weadth* and *breadth*, asked me, whether it was a pond merely for use, or ornament, and in short, what *it was about?*

About? said I.

Aye, about, rejoined Smack; I mean, is it like our ponds in and about town; or is it only a downright country puddle, without either genius or entertainment?

I don't understand you Mr. Smack.

Dont you? cried Smack; to speak plain then, as the poet says, what conceits and fancies does it exhibit? Is there not a figure playing off a fountain? Is there not a little chubby-

cheeked fellow p—f—g pure water? Is there any pipes and pleasure engines? Can you sprinkle your visitors all over, and wet them to the skin without warning? Hey?

No, indeed, said I.

No, he replied, I thought so; I thought you was too far from London for that: there, it must be owned we have the advantage of you! we can make the water play all manner of tricks.

Indeed! said I.

Oh sir, cried Smack, our improvements are amazing and *perdigus*, in this respect. Some of your *littereaty*, really think we now have got as far as we can go in this particular: why, we can make the water rise, and roar like a sky-rocket; we can make our images cascade from every part of the
human

human body: then, fir, our figures are finely done, admirably executed: the Venusses, the Graces, and the *Maidoners*, as the poet says, are enough to make a man jump out of his skin: all just like nature, fir; 'all naked:—there's the face, and the arms, and the shoulders, and the—what not—for all the world, as if it was the thing itself—aye, as if it was the very *moral* of the woman—there, you see all for nothing, as the poet says: they are all fronting the road, with their faces turned to entertain the passengers, and their b—k—d—s to the family!—Oh Mr. Benignus, *taste* is come to a *monstrous* pitch indeed!

By this time, Mr. Green began to open his eyes, after the refreshment of his panacea; and, without making any sort of apology, for having
 been

been caught napping, pushed about the bottle with renovated vigour; and said, that *he* who first refused his glass, should be punished with a pair of challengers: even you, Benignus, said he, must for once play the rake; for I am a thousand-pound man, and if you don't get elevated beyond all the cares of this world, upon the occasion, I shall think you envy my good fortune, and have not a spice of benevolence in your nature: try for once, my dear boy, what a stoop of good liquor will do. I am afraid, Benignus, you are too sober a man for felicity. Odsbobs my friend, one may starve happiness by bad living; and take my word for it, if a man is in good circumstances, Champagne will make him still better; and if he is in a poor, dispirited way, a chear-
ful

ful glass will set his heart a dancing, and his head will be too light for the leaden weight of calamity.

Some how or another, Green chatted me into tolerable spirits, and I drank more than enough to make *me* (who was not used to such freedoms) particularly talkative.

In the midst of these dissipations, Mr. Blake proposed, as it was a fine evening, that we should take a hackney-coach, and cool ourselves with a ride, and a comfortable dish of tea, at his cottage at Kennington. This proposal was no sooner made, than it was agreed to, and we set off immediately, after *clearing decks*, as Green termed it. Accursed is he who spill-eth his liquor, said this rattle of a character: not the fiftieth part of a drop must be left upon the table.

At

At the cost of some severe drinking, the decks were cleared, and the bill introduced; to which, when I offered to contribute my share, Green caught hold of my hand, and exclaimed—Fie on't, Benignus, what are you going to do? Am not I a thousand pound man; and did not *you* treat last? not a creature present pays a farthing of *this* but myself! So saying, he rang lustily for the waiter, to whom he gave half a crown as a compliment; paid the amount of the bill, without examining the particulars, hung upon my arm as he staggered to the coach, and bid the coachman drive to Kennington-common like a devil.

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